Small Players of the Great Game

The settlements of Iran's eastern borderlands and the creation of Afganistan

Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh

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SMALL PLAYERS OF THE GREAT GAME

This book deals with the nineteenth-century Anglo-Russian Great Game played out on the territorial chessboard of eastern and northeastern parts of the waning Persian Empire. The Great Game itself has been written about extensively, but never from a Persian angle and from the point of view of the local players in that game. Looking at the territorial consequences of the Great Game for the local players is a unique approach, which deserves a special place in the studies of history, geography, politics and geopolitics of the age of modernity.

Particular attention is paid in this work to the impact of the age-old rivalries between local dynasties such as the Khozeimehs of Khorasan (of Iran) and Abdalis of Afghanistan on shaping the global structure of the Great Game itself and on the political geography of West Asia. The work presents a thorough study of the nineteenth-century Anglo-Russian games of geopolitics that have shaped today's political geography of West Asia and the evolution of the international boundaries between Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asian republics. For the first time, this study reveals how, through the agency of Britain and Russia, the state of Afghanistan and the former Russian provinces of Central Asia were created out of the northeastern provinces of the Persian Empire.

Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh is Professor of Geopolitics at the University of Tarbiat Modarres in Tehran, and Chairman of the Urosevic Foundation in London. For 35 years he has been doing research in and teaching the political geography and history of Iran and West Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Caspian Sea. He lectures extensively in North America, Western Europe, the Middle East and the Far East and has published widely in English and Persian, with translations in other languages.

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I dedicate this book to the memory of the late *Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam* without whose encouragement and assistance this book would not have been started let alone finished. He sadly passed away on 30th April 2002 unable to see the completion of this work.

I can take no political step without exposing (myself) to suspicious inquiries and interference on the part of either Russia or England. These two great powers, instead of discussing their rivalries with each other, always made Iran the victim of their mutual jealousies.

Iranian Prime Minister Mirza Ali-Asqar Khan Amibn as-Sultan 1902–1903

CONTENTS

	List of illustrations	ix
	Preface	xi
	Acknowledgements	xiii
	Introduction	1
1	The great game and its major players	8
2	Small players: the Khozeimeh family	41
3	Khozeimeh foreign relations	90
4	The partitioning of Khorasan and the creation of Afghanistan	122
5	The partitioning of Khorasan and Baluchistan and the emergence of modern boundaries	150
6	The partitioning of Sistan and the evolution of boundaries with Afghanistan	174
	Conclusion	209
	Notes	219
	Bibliography	243
	Index	249

ILLUSTRATIONS

Maps

2.1	The Khozeimeh amirdom at its peak (1747–1753)	62
5.1	Hashtadan and Hari-rud boundaries (MacLean's Line)	155
5.2	Namakzar and Qaenat boundaries (Altay's Line)	162
5.3	The Goldsmid and Holdich Lines in Baluchistan	171
6.1	Sistan boundaries (Goldsmid's Line)	189
6.2	Rough sketch of the Hirmand River and its tributaries	208

Plates

2.1	The Amir of Qaen and the staff of the amirdom	55
2.2	Major General Goldsmid and his staff with Amir Alam Khan of Qaen and Sistan	68
2.3	Amir Alam Khan III, Mir Tuman, Heshmat al-Molk I, Amir of Qaen and Sistan	71
2.4	Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, Heshmat al-Molk II, Amir of Sistan and Tabas	73
2.5	Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I	74
2.6	Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II Alam as Minister for Post, Telegraph and Telephone under Reza Shah (1939) and his son Amir Asadollah Kham Alam, Mohamma-Reza Shah's Prime Minister (1962–4)	81
2.7	Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II flanked by his two nephews: Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh and Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh	83
2.8	Amir Mohammad-Reza Khan Khozeimeh, Samsam ad-Doleh, the last Khozeimeh governor of Sistan	84
2.9	Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, when Amir of Qaenat and Sistan	87

2.10 The late Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, son of Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III and son-in-law of Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II, Governor General of Sistan and Baluchistan, Undersecretary of State for Agriculture, Majlis Deputy and Senator 89
3.1 The former British Consulate at Sistan 109
3.2 Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk flanked by the British and Russian diplomatic missions at Birjand in the early twentieth century 120
4.1 Two views of the walls around the city of Herat in the nineteenth century 145
4.2 Farrokh Khan Amin al-Molk (later Amin ad-Doleh) 147
5.1 Amir Masum Khan Khozeimeh, deputy governor of Sistan 172
6.2 Satellite photograph of Hirmand, Hamun and God-e Zereh 208

PREFACE

When I offered my book *The Amirs of the Borderlands and Eastern Iranian Borders* to RoutledgeCurzon, I was warmly invited by Mr Malcolm Campbell to take a fresh and different look at the subject, perhaps from a more international point of view. His suggestion opened up a new horizon for research and study into the historical and geographical implications of the role of an important local player in the Anglo-Russian Great Game of geopolitics in the nineteenth century. I was inspired by the possibility that this subject for study could be re-examined from an entirely different and perhaps more interesting perspective. I had already done the bulk of the research work and had the opportunity of resuming consultation with the sources that had helped me in my original work. Of these sources, the more senior and more knowledgeable members of the Khozeimeh family were still willing to assist me in my new undertaking in respect of the role that their ancestors played as the small players in the Great Game.

In my discussions with Amir Parviz Khozeimeh Alam I benefited from his insight into the power balance in the nineteenth century and how this affected the way his ancestors ruled in Greater Khorasan. Before that, I had conducted several months of discussions with Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam who had seen for himself the way his father Hesam ad-Doleh III and his father-in-law Shokat al-Molk II had ruled parts of Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan in the early twentieth century. During these conversations I learned that his forefathers had ruled areas now shared by Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan for about thirteen centuries. I already knew that, because of his family background and influence in that region, he himself had acted as the governor general of the province and as its representative in the Iranian parliament both as a Deputy and a Senator for many years.

During my initial enquiries I noticed that no one had thus far paid any attention to the impact on the political geography of the Iranian Plateau by the Great Game on the one hand, and by the smaller players in that game, like the Khozeimehs, on the other. The prospect of such a study presented a real challenge, and one that was well worth taking on. My new discoveries included the fact that published information on geopolitical aspects of the

Great Game and the role of Khozeimeh amirdom in it was far scantier than I had anticipated. Yet, I had the family's own valuable information available to me. Furthermore, documents of British Foreign Office stored in the Public Record Office proved to be invaluable. An abundance of unexplored British diplomatic correspondence on the role of the family in the process of shaping political geography of lands constituting Eastern Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan was there waiting to be discovered. Similarly, my access to the few unexplored Iranian government documents that have survived made it possible for me to appreciate the way regional entities have approached the issues that shaped the political geography of the region.

In the course of my research works, I discovered that the role of the frontier-keeping amirdom of Khozeimeh in the border provinces of Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan constituted a significant feature of the Great Game and played a key role in shaping the political geography of that region. My second discovery was that this particular aspect of political geography of the Great Game in West Asia had not been studied before, and that an attempt in that direction would amount to a notable contribution to the knowledge of history and geography of the region. I also discovered that the background to and evolution of boundaries between Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Central Asian states – one of the earliest examples of the modern creation of boundaries – had not been studied in depth. The natural conclusion was therefore to undertake a study of the role of the smaller players in the Great Game from a regional point of view. My hope is that this work will contribute to the study of the role of local authorities in shaping the political geography of the border areas of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia, a useful addition to the body of knowledge of the shaping of states and boundaries in our modern world.

Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh
London

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Much has been said of Anglo-Russian rivalries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including the Great Game of geopolitics played out by the two giants of those distant times, but historians and geographers have not elaborated on the role played by the smaller players in the game. One of the more important of these smaller players was the Khozeimeh Amirdom of Khorasan and Sistan. Most members of the present generation of its last ruling family live in London. Indeed, I have been fortunate to have known this family in London, and were it not for the exchange of information with them, this book would probably have never been started let alone completed. Moreover, it was with the cooperation of some members of the Khozeimeh family that I published my book on the evolution of Eastern Iranian boundaries. That book was privately printed in 1996 and there I acknowledged the generosity of Bibi Fatemeh Alam (Khozeime Alam), her husband Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, and their son Amir Parviz Khozeimeh Alam in sharing with me their knowledge of the role of their family in the areas of Great Game. Here again I wish to acknowledge their encouragement and cooperation in preparing this book. My special thanks this time go to Amir Parviz Khan Khozeimeh Alam for both encouraging the idea of a fresh study into the role of his forefathers in the Great Game of nineteenth-century Central Asia and for sharing with me his knowledge and views in that respect.

Of others, my sincere and everlasting thanks go first and foremost to those who have been the source of my inspiration and encouragement for academic works. They are the late Professor Jean Gottmann, an internationally respected political geographer of our time; Professor Mohammad Hassan Ganji, who is respected as the father of geographical studies in Iran; Dr Ali-Naghi Alikhani, a former Chancellor of Tehran University whose knowledge of the Khozeimeh family is vast and comes at first hand. Others who have encouraged and/or assisted me and who deserve my sincere gratitude are Professor K. S. McLachlan, Professor J. Anthony Allan, Professor Malcolm Yapp, Professor Manuchehr Agah and Professor Nasser Rahimi. Professor Keith McLachlan supervized my initial work on the political geography of

Eastern Iran. Professor Allen, Professor Agah, and Professor Rahimi went through the large volume of the work I had prepared for my PhD thesis and made valuable suggestions. Similarly, Professor Yapp was kind enough to discuss with me various aspects of the history of the Great Game of the nineteenth century.

Here I have to acknowledge the unstinting generosity of the late Mahmud Foroughi, a very knowledgeable and a highly respected former Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan. He was personally involved in some stages of Iran–Afghanistan border-river disputes and negotiations, and shared with me, through correspondence, his knowledge and experience relating to the negotiations leading to the 1973 Iran–Afghanistan treaty. I had never met him or corresponded with him previously, yet being informed by Dr Ali-Naghi Alikhani and Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam of my initial work on the subject, he generously wrote to me all that he knew. My sincere thanks are due to (alphabetically): the late Amir Khosro Afshar, a former Iranian Foreign Minister who had discussed with me at length various aspects of Imperial Iran's foreign affairs; Dr Mostafa Alamuti, a former Deputy Prime Minister, who first introduced me to Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam; and to the late A. H. Meftah, a former Acting Foreign Minister of Iran who also corresponded with me on some aspects of the Iran–Afghanistan border disputes. I also thank Mr Hamid Nayer-Nouri, a highly respected historian, and his brother Mr Arsalan Nayer-Nouri, a former Iranian Ambassador, for being so generous in sharing with me their knowledge of the role of their grandfather, Prime Minister Sadre Azam Nouri, in the Great Game.

Similarly, my sincere thanks are due to Sir Denis Wright, former British Ambassador in Iran for allowing me to use a very interesting portrait of Farrokh Khan Amin al-Molk from his book *The Persians among the British*. Dr Ahmad Tavakoli, a respectable historian and a former Ambassador of Iran has written to and discussed with me his views of the concept and tradition of the Iranian government system, for which I am most grateful. I also would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr Malcolm Campbell of RoutledgeCurzon and his colleague Mr Jonathan Price for encouraging me to produce this book in its present form.

Of the institutes, the Document Centre of the IPIS (Institute of Political and International Studies) of the Iranian Foreign Ministry has been very generous in sending me copies of a number of documents relating to Iran–Afghanistan and Iran–Central Asian border disputes and agreements, including the valuable collection of Iran–Central Asia documents. My thanks are due to them and to the controllers of the Public Record Office, the India Office Library and Records, the Library of the School of Oriental and African Studies, the British Library and the Library of the Urosevic Research Foundation in London.

Last, but by no means least, I am thankful to Ms Margaret Davis and Ms Pamela Davis of the Urosevic Research and Study Foundation for their

usual assistance to me in my academic research. I am very grateful to my dear wife Nahid Mojtahed-Zadeh and my beloved daughters Tosca Nayereh and Elica Najmi Mojtahed-Zadeh for their understanding and tolerance of my continued work and unsocial hours. My special thanks are due to Elica for assisting me in typing the text of this book. In Iran, I can hardly find a word that would adequately express the depth of my gratitude to my sister Hajieh Susan Mojtahed-Zadeh (Salarian) for looking after my welfare with care and generosity whenever I am there for research and teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The Great Game

The Great Game of the nineteenth century, which resulted in the creation of Afghanistan and the formation of Central Asian states in east and northeastern territories of the old Persian federation, is the overall focus of investigation in this book. The detailed study, however, includes changes and modifications that this game of geopolitics caused in shaping the political geography of South, Central and West Asia – changes and modifications which ended in the creation of a number of new and independent countries in territories that previously belonged to the Persian federative system, generally known as the 'Persian Empire'.*

The active players of this game, namely the British and Russian Empires, will be briefly introduced and I will also describe the political and legal fabric of state in Iran (the Persian federative empire) – the passive player in the Great Game (Chapter 1). An examination of the nature of the political and legal fabrics of state in the Persian federation, which allowed rearrangement of the political map of Greater Khorasan (Central Asia and Afghanistan) to take place in the nineteenth century, provides a basis from which to appreciate the rearrangement of the political geography of Asia. After all, it was the autonomous status of the amirdoms of Khorasan, Afghanistan and Central Asia in that empire, which allowed the Great Game to be played out as if on a chessboard. While the big players and some of the minor players are better known in the historical studies of the Great Game, historians have made no attempt to introduce one of its most important small players. The smaller players in this game include such local dynasties as the Abdalis of Afghanistan and Khozeimehs of Khorasan and Sistan. Whereas the Abdalis are better known in the historical studies of Afghanistan, the role that the Khozeimehs played in the political geography

*'Persian Empire' is a term used in European texts in reference to the federative (*shahanshahi*) system developed in Iran from the time of the Achaemenids. See Ahmad Tavakoli, 'Empraturi = Shahanshi', Ayandeh monthly, Tehran, Vol. XIX, Nos. 7–9, 1993, pp. 828–30.

of the region remains relatively unknown. Hence two chapters of this book are allocated to the study of the Khozeimeh amirs of Iran's eastern borderlands, the role they played on the geopolitical arena of Central Asia (Chapter 2), and their foreign relations (Chapter 3). The remaining chapters deal with details of the impact of Great Game on the political geography of Greater Khorasan, Central Asia, Sistan and Baluchistan.

The game itself was played out between these players until the turn of the twentieth century, when the British and the Russians decided to cooperate in the face of greater changes in international politics. They went so far in this cooperation as to sign an agreement in 1907 whereby Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet were divided into zones of British and Russian influence. Nevertheless, Anglo-Russian rivalry had set the stage for the emergence in international relations of a bipolar geopolitical system which was to last for the whole of the twentieth century. The Russian power was replaced by that of the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, when a general anti-climax to the European colonial geopolitics of the previous century began. With the signing of Versailles Treaty of 28th June 1919 the world of colonial geopolitics gave way to a new era of power struggle in Europe which ended in the outbreak of the Second World War. At the end of this war the United States of America represented a new dimension in global geopolitics and replaced Britain in its global rivalry with the Soviet Union.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the collapse of the bipolar world and allowed the Central Asian republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to gain independence for the first time in their history. The crumbling of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact resulted in the collapse of the entire bipolar geopolitical system, and the emergence of the United States of America, as the sole superpower at the dawn of the twenty-first century, which proclaimed a 'New World Order'. Yet, the process of globalization in the early twenty-first century suggest the coming of a different and more pluralistic system based on multi-polarity.

In short, this book deals with events in the nineteenth century that laid the foundations for the Great Game between Britain and Russia. It deals with the impact of this game on the political geography of South, Central and West Asia, and the way this game resulted in the formation of a number of new states and their role in the bipolar geopolitical system in the twentieth-century world of international politics. Furthermore, this study examines the impact of the Great Game of the nineteenth century on the changing political map of Asia in the twentieth century with the aim of detecting its consequence on global political life in the early twenty-first century. The result, I hope, will facilitate a better understanding of current affairs in Afghanistan and West Asia.

The country of Afghanistan was created in the Great Game as a buffer state to fence off Russian threats to the British position in India, not because there was a nation waiting to be born with the assistance of British

midwifery. The uncompromising tribes put together hurriedly in the mid-nineteenth century to give meaning to the myth of an Afghan nation lacked the impetus for nationhood, and Afghanistan's tribal components remained as uncompromising throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as they were before the British manouvred them together as a nation.

Finally, this study aims to encourage new awareness in Western academic circles that British and Russian imperial interests in the Great Game of the nineteenth century necessitated the distortion of existing geographical arrangements in favour of drawing a new political map for the area affected by that game. This in turn necessitated a distortion of the history of territoriality in the region whenever it suited British and Russian interests in the areas where the game was played out and to justify the game itself. Scholarly works of history and political geography of those parts of the world cannot afford to neglect the fact that documents and diplomatic correspondence compiled by the agents of European imperial interests in Asia cannot be treated as the impartial testimonies of third-party observers. Uniquely valuable though these documents are in any study of political geography and history of Asia, the reality is that these texts were written and compiled by agents of British and Russian imperial interests at the time and deserve to be treated with much care and criticism. The truths are to be sought between the lines by comparing the contradictory messages presented in these documents. This is exactly the way this book has been researched and I hope it will shed a new and more realistic light on the events that have shaped the political geography and history of South, Central and West Asia.

A background to the organization of space in the areas of the Great Game

Whereas such concepts as state, territory and boundary appear to have gained clear meaning in the pre-Islamic Persian Empire, they become highly vague and uncertain in the post-Islamic revived Iran. This must be because of the influence through Islam of the uncertainty surrounding these notions in Arab civilization reinforced by the notion of 'universality of Islam' itself, which knows no national divisions, no boundary. Moreover, the Safavids who revived territorial Iran made no effort to update ancient Persian concepts in this regard and this was a handicap that showed its effect at the time of the Great Game.

Though the Achaemenid kings carried out military invasion of the Greek city-states to the west and the Turani territories to the east, the state that they created was more culturally inclined than based on rigid territoriality of the modern kind. This was of course based on the Achaemenid approach to the issue on the basis of wanting to create a state of universal aspiration,[1] and this was exactly what enticed Alexander the Great to Persia. By engaging in

the issue of their state on the basis of a commonwealth of semi-independent nations or a federation of autonomous states, the Persians laid the foundations for the idea of 'global democracy' which in turn must have contributed to the evolution of the Graeco-Roman version of democracy.

Though the Achaemenids and Parthians appear to have had a clear vision of the political organization of territory, the concept of boundary had to wait until the Sassanid state reached its maturity in early Christian era. It is in this period that the Persians developed the ideas of 'frontier' and 'frontier-keeping' states, 'buffer zones' as well as internal and external 'buffer states'. They even quarrelled with their eastern neighbours on matters of boundary pillars and border rivers.

The Arab Caliphate of Baghdad (Abbasid Caliphate – 750 to 1258 AD) copied Sassanid organization of territories almost in its entirety. They too created frontier-keeping states one of which was the Khozeimeh amirdom of Qaenat and Sistan that survived until 1920s.[2] What in reality the Safavids revived in terms of the territorial organization of their state was the Abbasid Caliphate's interpretation of the Sassanid version, not the original Persian version, and this must have been the reason for the vagueness of the concept in practice in post-Islamic Iran.

On their eastern flanks, the Persians faced Turan and the Eastern Turks. 'Turan' is a term used by Ferdosi (d. AD 1020) in his *Shahnameh*, the greatest work of epic literature in Persian language, in reference to peoples of Turkic origin in the eastern fringes of old Khorasan.[3] What constitutes Central Asia now was Greater Khorasan for most of the previous 20 centuries.

The Perso-Turan borderlines of the early Christian era are undoubtedly the first examples of boundaries, in the modern sense of the term, in the history of mankind. While the concept of frontier as a vast area or a zone of contact[4] between two states has existed for centuries, custodians of modern political geography tell us that 'boundary' is new and has evolved in Europe since the Industrial Revolution. They believe that the need to defining precise lines of separation and points of contact between states emerged with the 'world economy' in the nineteenth century. This new phenomenon of boundaries – one of the earliest examples of which was created in the eastern flanks of Iran – is said to have been the inevitable outcome of the expansion of imperialism of global aspirations in earlier periods and its inherent global economic order and new trade and communication systems.[5] However modern the concept of boundaries may be considered in the West, the original notion of boundary, as a line in space designed to separate 'us' from 'them', existed in ancient Persia. Apart from what Ferdosi says in his *Shahnameh* of boundary pillars at the time of Bahram (Varahram) Gour,[6] the Sassanids appear to have developed the concept of frontiers in clear terms. They created two kinds of frontier-keeping states: the internal frontier-keeping states within their four *kusts*, and the external ones, the most famous of which was the state of Hirah or Manazerah in Mesopotamia.

On the northwestern corner of the Persian Gulf, where the Iranian and Roman Empires' frontiers met, the vassal kingdom of Hirah was created by the Sassanids in the sixth century AD on the river Tigris, not far from their capital Ctesiphon. This frontier-keeping state, paid annually and defended by the Iranians, played the role of a buffer state for Iran, defusing pressure from the Romans.[7] In a similar move, the Romans created the vassal kingdom of Ghassan in the region now known as Syria, to play the same role *vis-à-vis* Iran for the Romans.[8]

On their eastern flank the Sassanids faced the Turans. Like the Romans, the Turans fought many wars with the Iranians. But unlike their arrangements with the Romans in the west, the Iranians created precise boundaries with the Turans in the east, which evolved throughout the ages, and the study of that constitutes the main aim of this introduction.

The Turans were nomadic powers, tribally organized and in territorial contests for centuries with the Iranians to their west. The Iranians successfully revived their old empire under the new Safavid dynasty. Under the Safavids (1501–1722) Iran restored her full cultural identity and true political independence. Shah Ismail came into power at the head of a new Shiite movement which began in Ardebil of Azerbaijan and proclaimed himself Shahanshah of Iran and the 12-Imamate Shiite Islam as the official religion of the state. This move brought the Ottoman Empire's eastward expansion to a halt and disarmed their argument that, as the Caliphs of Islam, sons of Ottoman had the birthright of ruling all Moslems. Under the Safavids, however, Iran revived the traditional Persian Empire approximately within the frontiers of the pre-Islamic federative. A hundred years later this federation shrank to a smaller size and remained so for the rest of the Safavid rule. In the second half of this period the federation extended from Daghistan (now in the Russian federation) to Mesopotamia and from Kabul to Baghdad. Politically, the Safavids created three kinds of division in their territorial organization:

1 the inner provinces, which enjoyed no autonomy;
2 the outer governorate generals (*biglar Beigi*s), which paid tribute and enjoyed a measure of autonomy;
3 the outer dependencies or states (*ialat*s), which also paid tribute but enjoyed greater autonomy.

The difference in political status of the *biglar beigis* and the *ialat*s was not clearly defined. Nevertheless, it was apparent that while the *ialat*s enjoyed greater independence or autonomy and appointed their own local kings, the *biglar beigis* were entrusted with a lesser degree of autonomy and their governors or political leaders were appointed centrally by the government of the shahansha. What the Safavids failed to achieve was updating of this ancient Persian system of government and territorial organization by

strengthening centre–periphery relationships with the application of concepts and measures contemporary to their political world. The absence of such an invigorated political organization of the space led to a virtual political void in areas of outer dependencies in the federation which, in turn, resulted in the territorial disintegration of Iran in the nineteenth century. It was this geopolitical void in the eastern territories of the Iranian federation that paved the way for British and Russian empires to further their geopolitical designs, during their Great Game. They became locked in a geopolitical game of pushing territorial advances into areas traditionally recognized as lands of dependent states of the Persian Empire. These Anglo-Russian territorial contests eventually settled the political geography of South, Central, and West Asia in its present form.

The obscurity of territorial arrangements in the south reached its zenith after the Safavids. The ties with Persian authority were completely vague and uncertain in Bahrain, Oman and other tribal entities therein. In pursuit of his desire to rule parts of the southern Gulf territories the Sultan of Muscat signed a treaty in 1811 with Fath-Ali Shah Qajar of Iran whereby, not only did he secure Iran's consent for his scheme, but also leased from Tehran Bandar Abbas and Makran on the northern shores of the Persian Gulf. To achieve this he had to declare himself as a subject of the Iranian government in 1867, and it must have been the only occasion in history when the king of a separate political entity became the subject of another king and country. What the Sultan of Muscat had done in reality was to reactivate the traditional ties with Iran of old Oman, without actually considering the northern section of Oman and other parts of southern coasts of the Persian Gulf as being anything other than under a mixed Iran-Oman control. Iran's traditional position in those areas, albeit vaguely defined, enjoyed an ongoing *de facto* recognition until the British entered the Persian Gulf in 1820. The rise to prominence of Russian and British powers during the Great Game of the nineteenth century and Iran's location to the south of the former and west of the latter, had an immense impact on Iranian political geography. The progressive system of territoriality of ancient times was reduced to its corrupt and outdated form of *mamalek-e mahruseh* or the 'countries of the realm'. This was soon to be further reduced to even a more ineffective form of *moluk at-tavayefi* or 'tribal kingship' under the Qajars when Iran's territorial disintegration began. The absence of a strengthened concept of territoriality at this time was demonstrated in various ways, sometimes even in the form of giving up territories to neighbouring countries. In 1890 for instance, Naser ad-Din Shah Qajar presented the Hashtadan Plain to Afghanistan out of his 'feeling of friendship for the English Government'.[9]

To the east, however, by mid-nineteenth century, when British India was creating Afghanistan in eastern territories of the waning Persian Empire, imperial Russian forces were busy conquering territories of Turkic Kazakhs

beyond Iran's northeastern limits. They pushed southward in spite of stiff resistance by the Uzbeks and other *khanats* of Central Asia who wanted to maintain the status quo. In 1866 the Russians took the Persian dependent *khanat* of the principalities of Khojand and Bokhara, and forced the latter to become a vassal state dependent of Russian Empire in 1868. The Persian-dependent *khanat* of Khiveh fell in 1873, and the Russians formally annexed Qukan in 1876.

In 1884 East Turkistan became the Chinese province of Sinkiang – now known as the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region. Under Russian control, after the civil war in 1921 West Turkistan was divided into five Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Turkmenistan became a Soviet republic in 1924, Uzbekistan in 1924, Tajikistan in 1929 with Khojand and the rest of Farghaneh Valley being transferred to it. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became Soviet republics in 1936. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 all these republics assumed their independence and joined the United Nations as independent states.

It was in this period, however, that Russia, China and the new state of the Afghans began to impose centralized governments on the region. In Iran, the old and long-exhausted Persian federative system was abolished in 1920s by Reza Shah Pahlavi who replaced it with the modern and centralized nation-state of Iran.

1

THE GREAT GAME AND ITS MAJOR PLAYERS

Introduction

The political development referred to in the studies of political history and political geography of nineteenth-century Central Asia as the Great Game, is a geopolitical game of rivalries between the two superpowers of the time: the Russian and the British empires. This game was played out on the chessboard of Greater Khorasan and had an immense impact on the political shape of the regional player, Iran. The game caused an everlasting modification in the political map of South, Central and West Asia. While the small player in this game – the Khozeimeh amirdom – is introduced extensively in Chapters 2 and 3, in this chapter the nature of the game itself will be examined followed by an introduction to the major players.

The game

In their peculiarly Western view of the world, geographers like J. A. Agnew and G. O'Tuathail trace back the emergence of a 'world order' only as far as the treaties of Westphalia of 1648.[1] A more global historical perspective makes it possible to see that the study of 'world order' can be traced back far earlier, to the first emergence of empires of global aspirations rivaling each other. Attempts by the Persian Empire to annex Greece and the Macedonian drive in annexing the Persian Empire could perhaps be recognized as early forms of conscious global geopolitics, laying the foundation for the emergence of the concept of a world order. The fact that the Macedonian invasion and annexation of the Persian Empire was motivated by Alexander's desire to build a 'world empire' is confirmed by many historians and those closely concerned with historical studies. In reply to a letter by this author, Jean Gottmann, a highly respected political geographer and an authority on Greek civilization wrote on 17th June 1987:

> Iran must have belonged to the 'Western' part of mankind, and I suspect that this was what Alexander the Great of Macedonia, a

> pupil of Aristotle, therefore, in the great Western philosophical tradition, found in Iran and that attracted him so much that he wanted to establish a harmonious, multi-national cooperation between the Iranians and Greeks within the large empire he was building.[2]

The fact that Alexander the Great found himself philosophically at home in Persia is acknowledged in his cry when capturing Persepolis that he was the true successor to Cyrus the Great. Later, in the time that preceded the Christian era, a balance was strucken between the Roman and Persian Empires with Egypt playing a key role in connection with Rome, that gave rise to a geopolitical order in the civilized world of the Western Hemisphere: in Europe, West Asia and North Africa. Similarly, at the time of the birth of Islam, Arabia was caught in a geopolitical vacuum created by a triangular balance that evolved between the Persian, Abyssinian and Roman Empires. It was this geopolitical vacuum that eased the birth and facilitated the spread of Islam. The rise in Europe of Christian powers brought them face to face with the Islamic Caliphate in the lands holy to both. Hence Palestine emerged as the heartland wherein the two sides clashed, and the wars of the Crusades continued for years without an outright winner being declared. The Islamic Caliphate's power was shifted to the Ottoman Empire at the time when emergent European powers presented it with substantial challenge. While to the west the Ottoman Empire was in rivalry with the European powers, in the east it entered a fierce competition with the revived Persian Empire of the Safavids.

The European drive to create a world economy in the fifteenth century survived to take over the whole world. Peter Taylor (1989) believes that final attempts by both Spanish-Austrian Habsburgs and their great rivals the French Valois to produce a unified European world-empire should fail because of bankruptcy. But by 1557 the world-economy had truly arrived and survived.[3] Thirty years of war among European powers resulted in the 1648 peace treaty of Westphalia. This treaty divided Europe politically between France and Sweden on the one hand, and Spain and the states of the Holy Roman Empire on the other. The great French Revolution of 1789–1799 set the foundation for the emergence of new ways of political thinking and such new political concepts as nationhood and nationalism, nation-state, international system and international relations, etc. This was the dawn of modernity in politics, and in terms of power play, it gave birth to Napoleonic Empire in France, which began to change the political map of Europe and lands beyond.[4]

The British had established their first colonial empire in the Caribbean and North America in the seventeenth century. British rivalries with the French intensified European colonial rivalries in Asia and Africa. In a treaty signed in Paris in 1783, however, the British recognized the independence of

the United States of America. Nevertheless, on the European scene Britain posed the most effective challenge to the expanding French influence. Napoleon Bonaparte's campaign against his European rivals resulted in a series of military clashes in Europe generally known as the Napoleonic Wars. These wars ended in a catastrophic defeat of the French power. The Paris treaty signed on 20th November 1815 by Britain, Austria, Russia and Prussia pushed France out of the race for some time and divided various colonies worldwide in a different world order.

Though British power increased to the level of a large empire in the seventeenth century in the Americas, it reached global proportions when Lord Arthur Wellesley completed his conquests in India at the turn of the nineteenth century. This was the time when the Russian Empire was making rapid advances in Central Asia, and Russian power too increased to the level of a global superpower at the turn of nineteenth century when the Kazakh conquests were completed and Russia's southward push began. The territories contested in this clash of giants belonged to the Persian Empire in an ancient and long-exhausted federalist system. From the point of view of political geography, the vast expanse that included Central Asia and Afghanistan was but a collection of principalities ruled by local khans and amirs who were officially dependants of the Persian Empire. Hence the Great Game was played out between Britain and Russia in direct geopolitical and territorial rivalries, with Iran acting as a passive player whose eastern and northeastern territories were treated as the squares of a chessboard on which Britain and Russia conducted their game. Lord George Nathaniel, Marquis Curzon of Kedleston, British Viceroy in India at the end of nineteenth century and a major figure in the Great Game itself, said of this:

> Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia – to many these words breathe only a sense of utter remoteness, or a memory of strange vicissitudes, and of moribund romance. To me, I confess, they are the pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the domination of the world.[5]

Iran's dependent principalities of Kabul, Herat and Qandehar were joined together in the independent kingdom of Afghanistan in the wake of Nader Shah Afhshar's assassination in 1747, with Ahmad Khan Abdali crowned as Ahmad Shah Dorrani, its first king. The new kingdom disappeared in the 1770s with the demise of Ahmad Shah, and Kabul, Herat and Qandehar went back to their traditional status as separate principalities tributary to the Persian Empire. The British began in the 1820s and 1830s to suspect a Russian threat to India. There were two views in these suspicions of the way that Russia might attack India. One view was that it might attack via Turkestan, but informed circles in India eventually dismissed this. The other view, which was taken seriously by the British, was that Russia might gain

influence in Iran and use that country as a means of attacking Afghanistan. By doing so, Russia could gain a strong position near the borders of British India and would be able, whenever it suited her, to stir up unrest in India and thus oblige Britain to increase her military garrison there to such an extent as to make it unprofitable to hold India in the future.

Furthermore, the British believed that by gaining leverage in India the Russians could use it as a means of compelling them to make concessions to Russia in Europe and other places. Hence the British began searching for a solution to these possibilities either by rebuilding friendship and confidence with Iran or by creating an alternative position of strength in Afghanistan. British efforts in the 1830s to build confidence with Iran collapsed in 1837 when the Iranians moved troops to Herat to put down a rebellion there. Suspecting the Iranian Prime Minister Haj Mirza Aghasi of acting under the influence of the Russians, the British decided to establish their own influence in the countries that later made up the amirdom of Afghanistan. The British decided to establish their influence in that country by replacing the existing rulers with one who would be under British control. This end was accomplished in 1839.[6]

Britain's geopolitical game in Afghanistan ran into difficulty as the first Anglo-Afghan war broke out. The British found out as a result that the burden of sustaining a puppet regime in Afghanistan was simply too great and the Afghan position was abandoned in 1842.[7]

The Iranians, in the meantime, succeeded in maintaining their Central Asian dependent principalities of Marv and Khiveh in 1839. Iran's military actions against the rebellious khans prevented Russia from establishing her control over these states in Central Asia. It was as a result of this new status quo in Afghanistan and Central Asia that the British and the Russians became more willing to cooperate in Iran and its dependent principalities. But the practice of this cooperation broke down in 1854 when the Crimean War began in Europe and in the East the British decided to support the aspirations of Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul in the mid-1850s revive the independent amirdom of Afghanistan.[8]

The Russian armies continued their progress into the *khanats* of Khiveh, Bokhara and Kughand. Apparently this was not the reason for the resumption of the Anglo-Russian game in Central Asia, rather the game was resumed because of a revived interest in Kashgharia as an area whereby Russian armies might reach Hindu Kush.[9] To prevent this from happening, the British decided to assist in the revival of the kingdom of Afghanistan as a buffer zone between India and Russia. The British therefore, assisted Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul and his heir and successor Shir Ali Khan in recreating and maintaining the unity of Afghanistan. Dust Mohammad's forces subdued Qandehar and seized Herat in 1863 before his death later that year. A number of British agents like James Abbott, Elder Pottinger, Henry Rawlinson, Richmond Shekespear and D'Arcy Todd were involved in

intrigues to safeguard the consolidation of Dust Mohammad's new territorial achievements.

British agents had established a certain influence in Kabul – which was some compensation for the virtual extinction of a British role in Tehran. The consolidation of Duost Mohammad's rule assuaged many fears in Calcutta. The post-Mutiny strategy of concentrating the bulk of British and native forces in the north and northwest not only defined the Punjab's role in the maintenance of India's internal security but tacitly served notice on any ruler of Kashmir that he kept his throne by compliance with the viceroy's dictate.[10]

Appreciation of these successes in Afghanistan, the Punjab and Kashmir should have done away with British India's Russophobia, but the Great Game went on and the British began to consolidate Dust Mohammad Khan's amirdom of Afghanistan by fiercely pursuing the matter of its territorial definition. Iranian Prime Minister Mirza Agha Khan Sadre Azam Nouri put an end to rebellion in the dependent principality of Herat by occupying that province. But the British prevented re-establishment of Iran's direct rule in Herat in 1856 and imposed upon her the treaty of Paris of 1857, whereby Herat was to be separated from Iran. This development left Herat undefended by Iran. Another treaty in 1857, this time with the Afghans, paved the way for the capture of Herat by Dust Mohammad Khan in 1863. The British succeeded in defining the Perso-Afghan frontiers in Sistan. General Frederick Goldsmid's boundary mission delimited the two countries' border line in the middle of Iran's traditional dependencies of Sistan and Baluchistan in 1872, giving the eastern half of each to Afghanistan and India respectively. This boundary mission consolidated Afghanistan's western flanks during the rule of tyrant Shir Ali Khan. Nevertheless, the Afghans fought their second war with the British in 1878, which lasted until 1880. After this war the British won control of Afghanistan's foreign relations, effectively reducing the country to a British protectorate. The cause of this war is said to have been the unstable character and neurotic impulses of Viceroy Lord Lytton. The officials of the British Indian Empire, whom Lytton resisted, eventually secured a degree of cooperation at the close of the war in 1880, which resulted in the assertion of authority in Kabul by another tyrant – one even worse than Shir Ali Khan. This was his son Abdur-Rahman Khan, during whose reign Captain Algernon Durand of British India delimited and demarcated the boundary between Afghanistan and British India in 1893. This boundary line, generally known as the Durand Line, though it gave further approval of the notion of Afghanistan being a buffer zone between the British and Russian Empires, proved to be a disappointment for the Afghans. With this boundary demarcation a sizeable part of Pashtunistan was given to the western half of India (now Pakistan) and Chitra was passed to Kashmir. To compensate Afghanistan for these losses, Captain Durand gave parts of Baluchistan – traditionally a dependency of the Persian Empire in India's western borderlands – to

Afghanistan. Durand was showered with praise, but his strangely put together boundary line proved to be a major source of friction and territorial conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan when the latter was created in mid-twentieth century.

Despite the spread of Russophobia across the British Empire, London and St Petersburg found common grounds for cooperation in other areas of world affairs. The early years of the twentieth century witnessed a search for accommodation in the face of a changed political map of Europe. This accommodation was enshrined in the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention whereby Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet were divided into two zones of influence between Britain and Russia (in the case of Iran leaving a middle zone of no foreign influence for the local government). Russian and British motives for seeking this entente differed fundamentally: Russia was concerned about the growing menace of Germany in Europe and wanted less pressure in the east, whereas Britain's preoccupation was to protect the security of its Indian Empire from the menace of Russia by keeping the Russians busy elsewhere. Notwithstanding this search for accommodation, Britain's strategic problem regarding India remained complex. On paper, the British even contemplated a major assault on Russia in Transcaspia, and from there to the Caspian sea and the Caucasus as far as the Black Sea.[11] The reality however, was somewhat different. Not only were the British unable to contemplate to marching through the northern passes, but nor were they able to garrison India adequately. Putting together an army that could undertake the mammoth task of attacking Russia on its home territory was completely out of question. Hence they still preferred to have the amirdom of Afghanistan as their buffer against Russia's seemingly inexorable advance towards India's northern frontiers. Russophobia nevertheless drove some quarters in India to concoct a scheme for the establishment of a field army which could meet direct attack or engage in pre-emptive operations. While Russia was clearly able to raise a massive army by mobilizing Central Asia, Britain, in an enormous effort, raised just two divisions for the invasion of Afghanistan in 1878.

In the 1880s Russia made major advances in east Turkistan as far as Pamir. These undertakings shifted Anglo-Russian geopolitical game from the west of Afghanistan – Central Asia – to the east near China. During the viceroyalty of Lord Ripon – appointed by British premier Gladstone – the Great Game was in relative abeyance. Ripon was opposed to the idea of creating buffer zones and bribing local chiefs for their allegiance. Nor did he believe in local initiatives, which had formed the essence of the Great Game that made British India what it had become. Rather, he preferred to adhere to Gladstone's dictum that British representatives at a 'distant point' should do as they were told by higher authority. This situation changed in the 1890s with Lord George Curzon's appointment as India's new viceroy. Curzon was just the man for games of geopolitics in the East. He was a

visionary who had his own ideas of the political geography of South and Central Asia, and indeed it was he who masterminded the actual modification of the political geography of the East. Lord Curzon was aided by his agent Francis Younghusband who resumed the Great Game but who was 'unconscious of the perils of failure which befell an agent who interpreted orders wholly to suit his own compulsions'.[12]

By the turn of the twentieth century the Great Game had reached its height. Anglo-Russian rivalries overshadowed rivalries among other powers. Colonial geopolitics in Europe reached its climax with the break out of the First World War. The Versailles treaty of 28th June 1919 rearranged the political map of Europe and that of the European colonies in Asia and Africa. Germany and Italy lost their colonies and the break-up of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the emergence of a number of new states in the Middle East, North Africa and Eastern Europe. Out of the Versailles treaty Britain and Russia emerged as the two superpowers with global aspirations. With their Great Game still in full swing in the East, Britain and Russia set the stage in the post-Versailles period for the emergence of a bipolar global system that lasted throughout the twentieth century. In the post-Second World War period Britain last most of its colonies, especially in the East. With India going, Britain was no longer a super power capable of rivalling and containing the Soviet Union, which had replaced the Russian power in that bipolar system. British power was replaced in the post-Second World War period by that of the United States of America. Soviet–American rivalries continued until the 1990s, when the bipolar system collapsed with the collapse of Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact.

The players

The Great Game, as has been noted, had three major players and a number of smaller players. The major players included the two superpowers of that time: the British and the Russian empires, and a passive regional participant in the shape of the old and frail Persian Empire. These three players will be introduced in this section of Chapter I, leaving introduction of the smaller players in the game to the subsequent chapters.

The British Indian Empire

In India Tamer Lane's grandson Babur founded the Mogul Empire in 1526, which coincided with the rise of the Safavid Empire in Iran. Finding himself in cultural affinity with the Safavid Iran, Babur introduced Persian as the official language of his empire. Iran's cultural influence in India thus began. When the British established their East India Company's trading posts, known as factories, in Surat (1612) and Madras (1639), India was under the influence of the Persian language, Persian arts and Persian culture. India's

Mogul Empire entered a period of instability with the death of Shah Aurang Zib in 1707. The East India Company, though still a commercial concern, entered more directly into politics in order to strengthen its position in India's changing political scene. It was in this period (the 1730s) that the Persian Emperor Nader Shah invaded and subdued India. He had ascended to the Iranian throne in 1729 in contravention of the Russo-Ottoman agreement of 1724 which conspired to dismember what was left of Iran after the fall of the Safavid Empire, and to divide its territories between Russian and Ottoman Empires. By returning the Indian crown to the defeated monarch however, Nader Shah was assured of the Mogul Emperor's friendship and loyalty. None the less the British observers in India never forgave Nader and the Iranians for invading and conquering India before they could make a move to do so themselves.

During the 1740s and 1750s the British East India Company was engaged in a series of campaigns against a French company of the same name and nature, the Compagnie des Indes, for primacy in India. These engagements culminated in the battle of Plassy in June 1757 in which the British defeated their French and Indian rivals. They established the East India Company as the dominant power in Bengal. In 1774 the British government appointed Warren Hastings the first governor-general of India. It was from this political platform that the British began to conquer territories in India. Lord Arthur Wellesley (later the Duke of Wellington) completed his conquests in India, allowing Britain in effect to bring Delhi under its control and make the Mogul Emperor of India its puppet.

The British replaced Persian with English as the official language of government in India in 1828, and British supremacy was finally assured with the conquests of the Punjab and Sind in the 1840s.[13] These conquests and the imposition of direct British rule gave rise to Indian resentment for the British lack of respect for native culture and identity. This resentment came to a head in 1857 when the Indian soldiers (the Sepoys) of the East India Company revolted. This mutiny ended up in a wider rebellion, which resulted in extensive loss of life on both sides. British atrocities in this incident left a bitter memory, which influenced Indian politics until the collapse of the British Indian Empire in 1947. The rebels persuaded the Mogul Emperor to resume his rule as Bahadur Shah II. British Parliament abolished the English East India Company in August 1858 in an attempt to put an end to the myth of the company being a brutal agent of the Mogul Emperor. The emperor himself was tried for treason and exiled to Burma that year. Thus, the British overthrew the Mogul Empire of India and imposed its direct rule. Nevertheless, in an attempt to gain the favour of traditional India, Queen Victoria pledged in November 1858 to preserve the rule of Indian princes, some 560 of them, in return for their loyalty. A viceroy and a separate secretary of state were appointed for India in London to serve in the cabinet, and thus the British Indian Empire was formally established.

Preservation of the new and extensive empire in India caused much concern among the British, who suspected other powers of conspiring to take India from them. In its western and northwestern flanks, however, the new empire faced real challenges from the Russian Empire. The British had convinced themselves that the Russians, in collusion with the Iranians, wanted to expand into India. With the passage of time these anxieties turned into an obsession that can be described as Britain's Russophobia of the nineteenth century. The British reaction to Russian challenges, however, culminated in what was to become known as the Great Game that was played out mainly in Central Asia, involving lands then pertaining to the waning Persian Empire.

Britain and the creation of Afghanistan

As for Afghanistan's fate in Britain's territorial game in Central Asia, suffice it to note that this game was played out in the countries that with the help of the British made up the amirdom of Afghanistan in the mid-nineteenth century. The British fought their first Afghan war with the Kabul authorities between 1838 and 1842 without much success at first, but later, in the mid-1850s, they assisted Amir Dust Mohammad Khan to take Kabul and then to put Kabul, Herat and Qandahar together as the amirdom of Afghanistan. By supporting Shir Ali Khan, Dust Mohammad Khan's son and successor, and by drawing his amirdom's boundary lines with Iran, the British were able to manifest official separation of Afghanistan from the Persian Empire and to establish a reasonable amount of influence therein. This influence did not last long, however, and in 1878 Britain's second war broke out with Afghanistan. At the end of this war in 1880 they helped Amir Abdor-Rahman Khan into power and by the terms of a treaty signed with him in that year, they brought its foreign relations under their control and turned Afghanistan into a British protectorate. Under this Amir, Britain demarcated the well-known Durand Line of boundaries between Afghanistan and India (1893) which effectively recognized Afghanistan as a buffer zone between India and the Russian Empire. Amir Abbor-Rahman Khan extended his control throughout the territory within these boundaries. His son and successor Amir Habibollah Khan, who reigned from 1901 until 1919, began modernization of the Afghan society by introducing modern education and industry. His son and successor Amanollah Khan initiated the third Anglo-Afghan war in 1919, which was brief and ended the British control of Afghan foreign relations. The resultant treaty of peace of 1919 recognized Afghanistan's independence.

Looking at the political development of Afghanistan's history in the wake of the 1926 independence, it is worth noting that in the same year Amanollah Khan took the title of king (shah) and extended Afghanistan's modernization to change the traditional way the people dressed up. Women's

traditional full-length veil, the *burqa*, was banned and men were told to wear western-style of clothing. These reforms offended religious/tribal leaders. Revolts broke out under the leadership of the religious Bacheh Saqqa and Amanollah fled the country. Order was restored a year later by four brothers related to King Amanollah, one of whom, Mohammad Nader Shah, became the king. His son and successor Mohammad Zaher Shah was deposed in a *coup d'état* by his close relative, Prime Minister Mohammad Davood, who established Afghanistan's first republic in 1973.

From this date until 1980 Afghanistan went through a period of successive left-wing *coups d'état* which eventually brought communist elements into power who in turn paved the way for the Soviet occupation of their country. Afghanistan's fourth war was fought against the Soviet Union. Although this war ended in a bitter power struggle among the Mujahedin coalition governing that country, this struggle eventually resulted in helping the creation of Taliban forces by Pakistan in collusion with the US/CIA and Saudi Arabia mainly aimed at serving the US policy of destabilizing Iran. Meanwhile, the Taliban's efforts to bring all Afghanistan under control led to another bitter civil war, which went on until 2002, when a US-sponsored coalition established the Afghan interim government. On the international front, the failure of the efforts by Pakistan and the Taliban to bring international recognition for the latter as the legal and legitimate government of Afghanistan, together with Taliban's extremist interpretation of Islam, resulted in the regime's total isolation. This isolation encouraged the Taliban to attract terrorist organizations such as Bin Laden's al-Qaeda and to rely on income from opium cultivation in the country (which accounts for about 80 per cent of world illicit drug trafficking). Bin Laden and his al-Qaeda organization were accused of having masterminded the terrorist attacks of 11th September 2001 on New York and Washington, an unprecedented terrorist atrocity. This shocking experience made the United States realize that its Pakistan-Taliban approach was disastrous. Undoubtedly this incident channelled the wrath of the United States against Bin Laden and the Taliban in the form of bombing raids on Afghanistan. In effect this is the country's fifth war, and one which still continues.

The Russian Empire in Central Asia

The Russian Empire was undoubtedly established by Ivan IV, better known as Ivan the Terrible, who was proclaimed tsar (zar = Russian for Caesar) of Russia in 1547 and reigned until 1584. He had annexed non-Russian lands in the Volga region and areas east of the Volga in the Urals and Siberia, but much of the old heartland remained in a shambles until Peter I became Emperor of all Russia in 1690s. Tsar Peter I came into power as co-sovereign in April 1682 at only 9 years of age. When he was 23 he became the sole occupant of the Muscovite throne and began the modernization or Westernization of Russia.

Variously described as very tall, tremendously strong, fantastically energetic, intellectually precocious, with rough good humour and a conglomeration of languages, but without formal education Peter I spent time in the foreign quarter of Moscow where he absorbed information about the West and taught himself the ways of modern statecraft. He declared war on the Ottoman Empire in 1695, and as he failed to capture the key fortress of Azov near the mouth of River Don by land, he built himself in less than one year a navy of 30 seagoing vessels and about 1000 transport barges. With these tools Peter besieged Azov and the Ottomans surrendered it in July 1696. His victory in the war against Finland and Sweden in early 1710s ended with the treaty of Nystad of 1721, which gave Russia the countries of Latvia, Estonia, Livonia, Ingria, a part of Karelia, and with some islands in the offshore areas of these lands. With this victory, the senate that he created bestowed upon him the titles 'Great' and 'Emperor of all Russia'. Peter's acceptance of the last title marked the official birth of the Russian Empire.

In 1725 when the Persian Empire was experiencing chaos caused by the uprising of the Afghan elements of the empire led by Abdali chiefs Mahmud and his cousin Ashraf, the Ottomans conquered several of Iran's northwestern provinces. Peter the Great rushed into the situation and concluded a treaty with the Ottomans for the partition of some of Iran's finest provinces, but the treaty was never actually executed at that time. A shrewd strategist, Peter had resolved to take advantage of the confusion in the Persian Empire caused by the Abdalis to expand the commerce of the Russian Empire, by making it the master of western coasts of the Caspian Sea. He commanded the troops himself and pushed his way as far as Daghistan near Caspian.

The will attributed to Peter the Great gives perhaps the clearest indication of his designs and those of the Russian Empire on all territories of the Persian Empire from below the Caucasus to Central Asia. In this will, which Sir Percy Sykes describes as 'uniformly aggressive'[14] Russia is urged to aim at almost universal dominion. In other words, with the will of Peter the Great, Russia set the stage for the start of the Great Game in the Persian Empire's territories in Central Asia and Afghanistan with the rival powers, which in this case happened to be the emerging British Empire in India. Moreover, this remarkable document evidently became the manual of geopolitical aspirations, not only for the Russian Empire but also for the Soviet Union which replaced it in 1917.

Clause IX of Peter's will calls upon his successors to:

> Approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. Whoever governs there will be the true sovereign of the world. Consequently excite continual wars, not only in Turkey, but [also] in Persia. Establish dockyards on the Black Sea; seize upon little pieces near this sea as well as on the Baltic, which is doubly necessary for the attainment of our project. And in the decadence of Persia, penetrate

> as far as the Persian Gulf, re-establish if it be possible the ancient commerce with the Levant, advance as far as India, which is the depot of the world. Arrive at this point we shall have no longer need of England's gold.

Clause XIII of this document introduces a charter showing Russian leaders how to achieve Peter's ultimate aim of establishing the 'empire of the universe'. It reads:

> Sweden being dismembered, Persia subjugated, Poland crushed, we must then propose separately, and very secretly, first to the Court of Versailles, then to that of Vienna, to share with them the empire of the universe. If one of the two accept, &c.[15]

Interestingly, it is clear that even as early as the mid-eighteenth century Russia proposed cooperation with its French and Austrian rivals in arriving at the 'empire of the universe'. By expressing no need for 'English gold' it prepared for rivalry with the forward-looking and growing British Empire. Similarly, Russia's geopolitical strategies *vis-à-vis* the Ottoman and Persian Empires were to usurp their territories in the Caucasus and Central Asia respectively. Russia's territorial contests with the Persian and Ottoman Empires went on throughout sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, imperial Russia's territorial success in the Caucasus and Central Asia set the agenda before the eighteenth century for rivalries with the British Empire that would lead to the Great Game of the nineteenth century.

Imperial Russia fought two wars with the waning Persian Empire of the Qajars in the Caucasus, which ended in the conclusion of the treaties of Golestan and Turmanchai, whereby several Iranian provinces in Trans-Caucasus were ceded to the Russians. With the Iranian provinces ceded to Russia by the Golestan treaty of 1818 the Russians created their Daghistan region (later the republic of Daghestan) and with the Iranian provinces ceded to them by the treaty of Turkmenchai of 1828 they created the republics of Azerbaijan, Nakhjavan and Armenia. Furthermore, inclusion in the treaty of Turkmanchai of 1828 of a clause allowing the Russians to interfere in Iran's internal affairs by supporting the position of Crown Prince Abbas Mirza Qajar marked the beginning of the capitulation and political decline of Iran. At the same time, increased Russian influence in Iran increased Britain's suspicions of a Russo-Persian conspiracy against India. The British thus began to suspect Russia of a geopolitical push towards India using Iran and her territories in Central Asia and Afghanistan. This was the reason behind the start of Britain's Great Game of geopolitics in those territories.

In Central Asia, the Sheibanid amirs ruled Bokhara as a vassal *khanat*[16] of the Safavid Persian Empire in the sixteenth century. Their power was passed

on to the Janid dynasty towards the end of the sixteenth century, who also ruled those countries as vassal amirs or *khans* of the Persian Empire. The Uzbeks continued to settle in what is present Uzbekistan then populated by Persian and Turkic-speaking people. Ancient Khwarazm – located around the delta of the River Amu Darya[17] – became known as Khiveh in the eighteenth century. By the mid-eighteenth century the Manghits, another dynasty of Bokhara rulers, rose to power in the Persian-speaking Khojand (the present day Tajikistan). A new dynasty in Khiveh forcefully incorporated Qaraqalpoghs' homeland into its amirdom in 1811. Another amirdom or *khanat* known as Qukan was centred on the Farghana Valley in the east.

The Russian push into Persian territories in Central Asia

Eastern expanses of what is now Central Asia witnessed the emergence of a Turkistan state in the 1870s. At the same time when the power of Manchu dynasty of China was on the decline, the Khojas of Turkistan were building pressure, with the help of Kughand, to gain control of that state of Kashgharia. Commander Yaqub Beg of Kughand seized the city of Kashghar and captured Yarghand in 1865 in a *coup d'état*. By 1872 he was the undisputed ruler of territories south of the Tianshan range. The Moslem state of Turkistan had thus emerged. Having secured this, he established diplomatic relations with both the Russian and British Indian Empires.

To the west of Eastern Turkistan, it did not take the Russians long to bring into the open their expansionist drive eastwards and southeastwards from Krasnovodsk. In 1873 Russia took Qezel Arvat and conquered the principality of Khiveh from Iran. Soon afterwards the Russians claimed from Iran the northern half of the whole basin of the Atrak. Similarly they erected a fort at Chikishliar, a place on the Caspian coast 9 miles northwest of the Gulf of Hassan-Qoli. In 1880–1881 (AH 1299)[18] Russian forces, commanded by General Skobelev, attacked and completely crushed the Akhal Tekke Turkman at Guk Tappeh. This military adventure resulted in the unification of the countries of Turkistan within the Russian Empire. It extended Russia's occupation of these countries as far south as the northern foothills of the Kopet Dagh and southeastwards as far as Ashkhabad (this name is a Turkish corruption of Persian Eshgh-Abad) and beyond. Having established themselves well inside the Turkistan territories of Iran the Russians imposed upon Iran on 21st December 1881 a frontier convention in Tehran, which defined a new border between the two states from the mouth of the Atrak River to the small town of Lotfabad, 60 miles east-northeast of Quchan. At the time, the Atrak flowed into the sea on the southern side of the Gulf of Hassan-Qoli.[19]

The Atrak River itself formed the boundary line between Iran and Russia as far as the junction of Sumbar at Chaat, 75 miles east-northeast of the Gulf of Hussein-Qoli. From this point eastward the boundary was rather poorly

defined. From Chaat, however, this boundary line ran first northeast and then east, along the ridges of the Songu Dagh and Sagirim mountain ranges for 55 miles. It then swung to the north, crossed the Chandir – a territory of the Atrak, just the west of the ruined fort of Yangi Qal'eh – and bore east again until it reached the Kopet Dagh mountains. The boundary then followed the ridge of this and the subsequent mountain range in a predominantly southeasterly direction as far as Lotfabad. This boundary line left the village and district of Firouzeh – on the road from Guk Tappeh to Shirvan – on the Iranian side. This convention also provided for the demarcation of the boundary line as far as Lotfabad.

A year later (1882) the Russo-Iranian delimitation and demarcation commission began its work, which lasted three years. The commission recognized Lotfabad village as belonging to Iran, but the exact frontier eastwards from this point to Sarakhs on the Tajan River was not ascertainable at the turn of the twentieth century. Lord George Curzon believed that most of the ambiguous points were clarified in a secret treaty signed in 1883 between Russia and Iran.[20] However, demarcation of the boundary was no easier than its delimitation. The nomadic Yamut Turkman tribes who had occupied both sides of Atrak were in the habit of crossing the river at certain seasons of the year. Although the treaty of 1881 had given them the right to do so, complications arose in respect of tax collection. This situation led to the Russian officials frequently crossing the border-river in their attempt to collect tax from the Iranian Yamut Turkmans on the Gorgan River. This infringement of frontier arrangements led to a dispute which was eventually settled by shifting the boundary to the south of the river in the 1893 treaty. Moreover, It was subsequently discovered that the Iranian commissioners had, either because of inadequate geographical knowledge of the frontier areas or through bribery, accepted an artificial irrigation canal of Atrak as the main body of that river and as the extreme western portion of the boundary. This canal had been constructed several miles south of Atrak inside Iran. Acceptance of the canal left thousands of acres of fertile agricultural lands to the Russians. A further complication arose when the Atrak River changed its course in its lower reaches and took a more northerly route to the Caspian Sea. Linked to these was a twofold Russian objective in seeking to extend their frontiers further to the south. In the first place, the arable land in the southerly parts of the lower Atrak basin was of better quality than the land in the north; secondly, by establishing themselves further to the south, they were able to secure control over practically the whole of the Yamut Turkmans. To achieve these objectives, the Russians imposed another border convention on the Iranians on 8th June 1893 whereby the Iranians ceded the village and district of Firuzeh to Russia, and received in return the following districts;

1 the small area on the south bank of the Aras opposite Abbasabad in the Caucasus;

2 the village and district of Hasar situated a short distance to the southeast of Lotfabad.

This convention defined the boundary southeastwards from Lotfabad to the Zolfaqar Pass, where it meets General MacLean's 1891 boundary line between Iran and Afghanistan,[21] and completes the definition of the Russo-Iranian boundaries on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea. This convention also provided for the demarcation of the boundaries southeastwards from Lotfabad.

Russia and the creation of the Central Asian States

The nomadic lifestyle of the Turkman tribes of Greater Khorasan (Central Asia) served as an excuse for the Russian intervention and ultimate absorption of those regions. Similarly, in the case of Iran, the incursion by the Turkman tribes of cross- border areas provided the Russians with a good excuse to continue their campaign of encroachments on the northern frontiers of Iran. Worse still was the uncertainty and confusion still looming over Russo-Iranian boundaries in Turkistan. In 1834 Britain's famous Arrowsmith published a map to illustrate Captain Burnes's travels in Iran, in which he placed the Iranian boundary to the north of the Atrak River. Another map was published in Britain in 1848 by C. Zimmermann, in which the Iranian boundary was placed some distance above the Atrak. This was in harmony with Sanson's Atlas of 1700, which also placed the boundary to the north of the Atrak River. In 1863 Murray published a map to describe Vamber's travels in Persia. In this map the Atrak and Gorgan Rivers were given to Turkman and the Qara Su was described as forming the northern boundary of Iran near the Caspian Sea. When in 1869 the Shah of Iran questioned Russia's intention with regard to the areas around the Atrak River, the Russians replied reassuringly that the two sides could come to a new understanding about these areas. The Shah had sought explanation from M. Beger, the Russian minister in Tehran, as to the purpose of a fort being built by the Russians at Krasnovodsk and an assurance that they should undertake to build no more forts at the confluence of the Atrak and Gorgan Rivers. The Shah had also sought an undertaking from the Russians not to interfere with the affairs of the Turkman and Khorasan territories of Iran. After communicating with his government, Beger informed the Iranian court in December 1869 that the Tsar *'recognizes the authority and sovereignty of Persia up to the banks of the Atrak river'*.[22] The Russian government further explained that their occupation of Ashuradeh Island was meant to protect the caravans from attack by Turkman tribesmen. The Iranian government accordingly informed the governor of Astarabad (later Gorgan) that the Russians were not to cross the Atrak, which belonged to Iran, while on the other side of the river the Russians would be at liberty to build whatever they liked.[23]

Three years later (in 1873) articles appeared in the British press, specifically in the *Morning Post* suggesting that a secret treaty had been signed on behalf of the Shah and the Tsar whereby Iran ceded to Russia the valley of the Atrak River.[24] These reports were, denied by the officials of the foreign ministries of both governments. What was true at that time, however, was that the Iranians began to suspect Russian movements along the course of the Atrak.

Russia was deeply involved in rivalries with Britain at the time, and the Great Game of geopolitics between the two giants of the nineteenth century involved occupation of Iranian territories by one or the other. Intelligence in Britain of Russian intentions to occupy the frontier areas of Qezel-Arvat, Barani and Baorma caused the Iranian minister in London to express his government's anxiety on the subject, and to enquire whether the time had not yet come for recognizing the integrity of Iran as well as Afghanistan. The British Foreign Office informed the Iranian minister in London that there was an understanding between Britain and Russia on the subject of the independence of Iran dating from 1834, and that Lord Palmerston had confirmed this in 1838.

It is worth noting that Iran was at that time greatly apprehensive of the might and power of her two giant neighbours: Russia and British India. The government of Iran could not seriously and openly remonstrate against Russian activities and thus risk exposing itself to the full force of Russian anger. Indeed, its fears were at times concealed by hopes that Russia would become its protector in the face of British interference in Iranian affairs. The British, at the same time, were wary of Iran's 'collusion' with Russia against territories controlled by them in Afghanistan and beyond. It was because of these suspicions that Britain decided to support the separatist drive of the principality of Herat from Iran and the creation of the state of Afghanistan to play the role of a buffer between herself and the suspected Russo-Iranian axis.[25] Against these British suspicions the reality was that Russia was busy by one excuse or another in a scheme of encroaching on the Iranian territories. On 10th March 1873 a detachment of Russian troops crossed the Atrak River and attacked the Yamut Turkmans within 8 miles of Astarabad. In reply to the question by the Iranian government, the Russians explained that the action in question was one of necessity and could not be avoided as it had left the Iranian frontier unguarded and the Russian authorities felt it their duty to punish the Turkmans. It was stated, however, that the act was not one of aggression, and Russia renewed her assurances that she fully recognized Atrak as the northern boundary of Iran.[26]

Having gradually assumed the right of punishing the Yamut Turkmans, the Russian government took a bolder step in 1874 when General Lamakin landed with a number of soldiers at a place called Shah Qadam, eight stages from Astarabad. There he issued a circular to the Yamut Turkmans telling them that from the Gorgan River – 3 miles from Astarabad – as far as Khiveh belonged to Russia. The circular, in which the General styled himself

as the commander over the Turkmans, meant to call upon Turkmans to adopt peaceful habits and to refrain from molesting Russian trade.[27] The political significance of this step could have been the assumption by Russia of authority over the Turkmans and over the Atrak and Gorgan Rivers. Once again the Iranians seemed to have been easily satisfied with the explanation from the Russians about this incident. In spite of this, General Lamakin went to occupy Qara-Qal'eh on the Atrak with 600 men and two guns. Compared with the silence of the Iranian authorities, the British felt some anxiety at this movement of the Russian troops as they considered the occupation of any strategic points on the Atrak as a first step towards the occupation of Marv and the beginning of constant intrigues in Afghanistan. On 12th December 1874 Thomson of the British Legation at Tehran suggested in a telegraph from Tehran that the British should give Iran moral support in their protest against the Russian movements. Convinced of Iran's lack of real courage in standing before the Russians along with the confused state of frontiers between her and Russia, British Foreign Office informed Thomson that it would be better for the British to stay out of the incident.[28]

At the same time, the Russians adopted a conciliatory policy towards the Turkmans to secure their confidence and pave the way for their complete subjugation. This policy bore favourable results and in some cases not only did the Turkmans show submission but were actually inclined to assist the Russian troops. On 11th August 1875 the Russians landed building materials at Qezel-Su, apparently for the purpose of constructing a new fort at Bezat-Haji on the Atrak, about 90 miles east of Hassan Qoli. Earlier on, General Lamakin started from Krosnovodsk on the so-called scientific exploration of the ancient bed of the Oxus and on 21st July he passed Qezel-Arvat to attack Tekke Turkmans. Moreover, in September 1875, the *Journal de St. Petersburg* announced that the Akhal Tekke tribe had submitted to Russian rule.[29]

The Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a note to the Russian minister in Tehran on 26th December 1874 enquiring about the boundary line on the Atrak River and Iran's authority to enforce it. The Russian minister repudiated, on the strength of the terms of the 1869 arrangement, any Iranian claim to authority over the tribes. The Iranian Foreign Minister, in reply, reminded the Russian minister that:

> The arrangement of 1869 was sudden and telegraphic, the heads of the matters were stated, but details were not entered into. It does not follow that because all the old established rights of Persia were not inserted therein they should be made a subject for doubt and refutation.[30]

In his reply to this letter on 5th March 1875, the Russian Minister rejected the repeated complaints of the Iranian government and stated that the

arrangement of 1869, though telegraphic, was nevertheless concluded after long discussions. He added that both governments considered it to be perfectly clear and sufficient.[31]

In his subsequent letter to the Russian minister, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated on 7th March 1875 that action such as Lamakin's addressed to the Turkman tribes was done in direct opposition to the very arrangement of 1869. 'Furthermore', stated the Iranian Foreign Minister, 'if the Russian Minister referred to his own letter No. 82, of 21st Ramezan 1286 (3rd December 1869) which, after the telegraphic reply from the Imperial Minister for Foreign Affairs, he addressed to the Persian Foreign Department, he would perceive that 'the essential and high object of the Persian government has been and still is, maintenance of their ancient sovereign rights over the Turkman tribes'.[32]

When Qukan was expanding northwards in the mid-nineteenth century, imperial Russian forces were busy conquering territories of Turkic Kazakhs, north of the Syr Darya River.[33] They pushed southward in spite of stiff resistance put up by the Uzbeks and other *khanats* of Central Asia. They took Khojand and Bokhara in 1866, and forced the latter to become a vassal state in 1868. *khanat* of Khiveh fell in 1873, and Qukan was formally annexed in 1876. These territories formed various districts and provinces in the Russian system. With the rise into power of the Soviet Union in place of the Russian Empire in early twentieth century, these territories were transformed into five Central Asian republics. Kazakhstan became a Soviet republic in 1936, Turkmenistan in 1924, Uzbekistan in 1924, Tajikistan in 1929 with Khojand and the rest of Farghaneh Valley being transferred to it, and Kyrgyzstan in 1936. All these republics assumed their independence in 1991 as a result of the dismemberment of the Soviet Union.

Unlike the British, who were more concerned in their game of geopolitics in and around Central Asia, with creation of colonies, protectorates and/or buffer zones, the Russians concerned themselves with outright occupation and annexation of territories in those areas. By the mid-nineteenth century though the Russians had consolidated their forcefully acquired territories in Central Asia, the British were not sure that their southward drive had come to an end. The memories of the will of Peter the Great still lingered and with the growing Russian influence in Iran after the 1828 Russo-Iranian treaty Britain convinced itself that Russia, with the help of Persia, wanted to push towards India. It was this British suspicion of Russian intentions that brought about the geopolitical contests between the two in the nineteenth century known as the Great Game.

Soviet–Iranian boundary adjustments

Russian southward expansion stopped with the signing in Tehran of the 1893 convention while the Iranians remained unhappy about having to cede

to Russia some of their undisputed territories in the frontier areas concerned. The rise to power of new regime of the Soviet Union after the October Revolution of 1917 marked a turning-point in Russia's territorial attitude towards Iran. On 26th February 1921, only five days after the success of the *coup d'état* staged by Brigadier Reza Khan (later Reza Shah Pahlavi) and Seyyed Zia ad-Din Tabatabaei, the Soviet government concluded a treaty of friendship with the new regime in Iran. Article III of this treaty states that the two powers agreed:

> . . . to accept and respect the Russo-Iranian frontiers as drawn by the Frontier Commission (sic) in 1881. At the same time, in view of the repugnance, which the Russian Federal Government feels to enjoying the fruit of the policy of usurpation of the Tsarist Government, it renounces all claim to the Achuradeh (Ashuradeh) islands and to the other on the Astarabad Littoral, and restores to Persia (Iran) the village of Firouzeh and adjacent lands ceded to Russia in virtue of the convention of 28th May (equivalent to 8th June, new style), 1893. The Persian Government agrees for its part that the Russian Sarakhs or 'old' Sarakhs and the land adjacent to the Sarakhs River, shall be retained by Russia.
>
> The two High Contracting Parties shall have equal rights of usage over the Atrak river and the other frontier rivers and waterways. In order finally to solve the question of the waterways and all disputes concerning any territories, a Commission composed of Russian and Persian representatives shall be appointed.[34]

Article XI of this treaty of friendship states that as the treaty of Turkmanchai was abrogated,[35] Iran was no longer precluded by article VIII of that treaty from maintaining a fleet[36] (on the Caspian Sea, and that both powers should, from the moment of signature of the present treaty'enjoy reciprocally the right of navigation on the Caspian Sea under their own flag.'[37] It is noteworthy that, in spite of this display of magnanimity, the Soviet Union did not return to Iran, either at the time or at any time thereafter, any of the vast territories that Tsarist Russia had acquired from Iran by virtue of the war and treaties of Golestan and Turkmanchai.

It is curious that the 1921 treaty of friendship limited itself to recognition of the boundaries between the two countries only as laid down by the treaty of 1881. It made no reference at all to the remaining portion of the borderline as defined by the convention of the 8th June 1893. Developments subsequent to the conclusion of the 1921 treaty remain to some extend obscure. While, on the one hand, the former bed of the lower Atrak seems to have been accepted by the Soviet Union as the extreme western portion of the boundaries, available evidence shows that until 1939 the village of Firouzeh was regarded by the Soviet Union as belonging to them. The *Bolshaya*

Sovietskaya Entsiklopedia (article on Firouzeh in 1936) and *Bolshoy Sovietskiy Atlas Mira* of 1939, for instance, show Firouzeh on the Soviet side of the border.

Attempts were made however, by the Russo-Iranian boundary commission in 1922 and in subsequent years to delimit the western point of the frontier, but little or nothing could be accomplished. This was because of the evasiveness of Soviet officials, as an official document of British Foreign Office describes.[38] As the lack of a definite borderline later gave rise to problems, it was agreed in March 1936 that a new Russo-Iranian commission should demarcate the boundary as defined by the 1881 treaty. Once again there was no reference to the frontier as defined by the convention of 8th June 1893 whereby some border areas were given to Iran in return for the village of Firouzeh being ceded to Russia.

Meanwhile, the Turkman and Persian tribes of Greater Khorasan (medieval Turkistan) continued with their struggle against Russian occupation of their countries. These movements resulted in the division of Turkistan into five new republics within the Soviet Union in 1924. It was in that year that republics of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan came into being for the first time.

It was reported in July 1926 that the Soviet Union was to return to Iran 185 square *verstas*[39] of territory in the neighbourhood of Pol-e Khatun, on the left bank of the Hari-Rud River just south of the point where it is joined by the Kashaf-Rud. The Russians had taken this land from Naser ad-Din, Shah of Iran, in the latter part of the nineteenth century.[40] Since all the land on the west side of the Hari-Rud and Tajan[41] in this region was already in Iran, the area in question must have been on the east bank of that river to the south of old Sarakhs.

Even as late as 1945, when Professor Lockhart's questions on the state of Soviet–Iranian boundaries were put to the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the ministry stated in reply that the entire frontier between Iran and Soviet Union, 'including that between Lotfabad and Dahaneh Zolfaqar has been delimited. Some differences however do exist'.[42]

Soviet–Iranian hydropolitics

Representatives of Iran and the Soviet Union met in February 1926 in a convention to determine necessary arrangements for the use of water of the border rivers between the two countries. Water in the relatively dry countries of Khorasan and Turkmenistan is of much significance in local agriculture and animal husbandry. British observers testify the local Soviet authorities had for long looked with a jealous eye upon all land that could be irrigated in those regions, together with sources of water. In his dispatch of March 1926, Sir R. Hodgson, for instance, stated that:

> The Russians from time immemorial had not only insisted that all water of the frontier rivers should be devoted to irrigating the cotton fields of Turkmenistan, but had gone so far as to compel the Persian inhabiting the frontier regions to root up all their trees so that no part of the water should be absorbed in Persian territory. As a consequence, considerable districts formerly fertile had been reduced to an arid state.[43]

The river convention of the two countries of February 1926 resulted in the signing of a treaty which put the two countries' river boundary on the middle of the border rivers and divided the water between the two sides on equal basis. Article XVI of the treaty concerns division of water in Atrak River. This article provides that:

> All the water of the Atrak River, which is co-extensive with the frontier between the contracting parties, shall be divided into two equal parts; one part for Persia and the other for U.S.S.R.
>
> The measurement of the water of the Atrak River shall be conducted by technicians of the contracting parties, for a distance of 14 versts from the frontier up stream on the territory of Persia. All of the water obtained as result of the said measurements is subject to division into two equal parts.
>
> In case Persia should decide, after the signing of the present Convention, to erect hydrotechnical installations along the Atrak River, on its territory, for the purpose of damming the water, the Government of Persia shall undertake to let pass, during the irrigation period, to the frontier between Persia and U.S.S.R., where the division of the water of the Atrak River begins, the same quantity of water that would have been available in accordance with meteorological conditions and in the absence of such installations. Persia shall forewarn U.S.S.R of its decision to establish such installation.[44]

Curiously enough, the convention had not sough the same undertaking by the Soviet Union in its use of extra water by using hydrotechnical installations along Atrak River on its territory for the purpose of damming the water. Nevertheless, the convention successfully prevented serious disputes erupting between the two countries on water uses of the river.

Thanks to the water from Atrak River, Dasht-e Gorgan or Gorgan Plain, in the south of that river's basin has been developed both through mechanized cereal cultivation and through more intensive grazing. A plan was drawn up in August 1957 by a joint Soviet–Iranian venture for building a number of irrigation reservoirs on the Atrak.

Unlike the equal division of the river Atrak's water between Iran and the Soviet Union, the 1926 water convention gave Iran less than one-third of

the water of the Hari-Rud (Tajan) River. Article XV of the convention reads:

> All the water of the Geri-Roud (Tajan) River, down stream from the Pul-I-Khatun Bridge and co-extensive with the frontier between the contracting parties, shall be divided into ten equal parts; three parts shall be utilized by Persia and seven parts by U.S.S.R.
>
> The measurement of the water of the Geri-Roud (Tajan) River shall be conducted by technicians of the Contracting Parties at the village of Doulat-Abad and on all the canals diverting from the Geri-Roud River into the territory of Persia, as well as conducted on the territory of U.S.S.R. along the entire distance of the Geri-Roud River from the village of Doulat-Abad up to the Pul-I-Khatun Bridge. All the water obtained as a result of the said measurements shall be subject to division into ten equal parts.
>
> For the purpose of accurately dividing the water of the Geri-Roud River at Doulat-Abad, technicians of the Contracting Parties will erect a permanent water gauge. The expense for the erection of this gauge will be borne by the Contracting Parties, in accordance with a mutual agreement concerning this project and proportionately to the quotas received by them at that point.[45]

The convention contains no explanation as to why and on what basis only three-tenths of the water of Hari-Rud River was allocated to Iran and seven-tenths to the Soviet Union. Similarly, the Iranians do not appear to have questioned, then or at any time thereafter, this obvious infringement of Iran's right to the water of Hari-Rud River.

The Soviets, however, continued to interfere with Iran's right to the water of the border rivers. An incident in 1950 provoked a note of complaint to the Soviet Union on 18th May that year. The Soviet press carried Moscow's reply to the Iranian government on 22nd June 1950,[46] which was, in essence, dismissive of the complaint of the Iranian government. A few days early, in an interview with British diplomats, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister explained that 'a dispute had arisen over the distribution of the water in the Hari Rud ... and that the local inhabitants had moved across from the Soviet to the Iranian side in order to demolish the channel through which the Iranians drew off their water.' The British Embassy dispatch continues that the incident had been terminated by the river drying up and that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tried without success to get the Soviets to agree to a proper demarcation of the frontier.[47]

This was the post-war era when Soviet reluctance in withdrawing its forces from Iranian Azerbaijan signalled the start of the Cold War between the East and the West for the rest of twentieth century. Not only were the Soviets not prepared to stop infringing Iran's rights to the border rivers, but

they also prevented her from exploiting the oil resources on her own territories south of the Caspian Sea, demanding exploitation concession for those areas from Iran, which was turned down by Tehran.[48]

The Persian Empire, a passive player

The waning Persian Empire of nineteenth century no doubt was a partner in the Great Game of geopolitics played out by British and Russian empires in Central Asia and the adjacent areas. The role of Persian Empire in this game, however, was not an active one. Rather it was a passive role that Tehran was forced to play by the two giants in her neighbourhood. In other words, without Tehran causing any situation that would warrant reaction by the British or Russian players of the Great Game, territories of her dependent principalities in Central Asia and Afghanistan became the squares of the chessboard on which Britain and Russia played out their Great Game. Nonetheless, the reality is that Iran's general political weakness together with her outdated political and territorial system worked as a major factor attracting her two super-power neighbours to play out their game of geopolitics in her territories. For a better appreciation of this important factor, an examination of the emergence, evolution and disintegration of Iran's political and territorial system is necessary.

The term 'Iran', which means 'the land of the Aryans or noble men', has always been the name for the country that is situated in West Asia. This name first appeared in the form of Iranshahr in the middle of the Sassanid era (AD 224–651). Nevertheless, the Greeks, Romans and subsequent civilizations continued to refer to this political entity as Persia and/or Persian Empire. This was clearly because of the fact that the first dynasty, the Achaemenids (559–330 BC), who founded Iran and came into contact with the Greeks, were from Persia in southern Iran. In other words, this country has neither been Persia, nor was it an empire. Considering that empire is a concept developed in ancient Rome when it expanded to include different nations under a single authority, it cannot be referred to as a federative system in which different nations live autonomously with their laws, religions, costumes and kingdoms intact. The political system that the Persians of southern Iran developed was shahanshahi; in today's terms it was a commonwealth of semi-independent nations, each maintaining its own religion, cultural identity and kingdom. Some would even suggest that the concept of empire might be a Roman adoption of the Persian *shahanshahi*; which closely resembles today's federative system.[49] On the same premiss, it would not be difficult at all to suggest that the Romans developed the idea of senate on the basis of the Parthian *mehestan* (the House of the Elders) or vice versa. The commonwealth was, on the other hand, a political system of universal aspiration ruled by the central authority of a Shahansha or king of kings of all the commonwealth, and it was this aspect of the system that attracted the attention of Alexander the Great.

The Achaemenids divided their extensive commonwealth of autonomous nations into 40 *satrapies* on the basis of cultural and religious identity of each. In matters of state politics, while the Athenians were busy with their version of democracy, the Persians developed a federative system in which peoples of varying cultural and religious identities were given the right to govern their own affairs autonomously with their religion and cultural identity respected.

The founder of the federation, Cyrus (Kurosh) the Great (559–529 BC) used to be the ruler of the vassal kingdom of Persia in the Median kingdom (709–559 BC). He and his successors substantially expanded and developed their new commonwealth of semi- independent nations and divided it into 40 *satrapies*, which included lands of Trans-Oxus, Sind, Trans-Caucasus as far as what is now Moldavia, Trans-Jordan and Syria, Macedonian and Cyprus, Egypt and Libya. The king of kings was not a lawgiver but the defender of the laws and religions of the federation.[50] To uphold the cultural and political independence of the various peoples of the federation and to respect their religions, the king of kings did not proclaim any specific religion. When conquering new territories the people were allowed to keep their religions, laws and traditions, and the great king endeavoured to restore their prosperity. Having entered Babylonia Cyrus the Great found thousands of Jews in captivity there. His reaction was to free them and send them back to their place of origin – Jerusalem. He did not go with them to capture Jerusalem but his respect for their religious freedom guaranteed their good-will towards Iranians for a long time. He commissioned the building of their temple in Jerusalem and the Jews reacted by assessing the work of Cyrus the Great as fulfilment of the prophecy of Isiah (chapter xliv)[51] where it says:

> I am the lord ... that saith of Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, thou shalt be built: and to the temple, thy foundation shall be laid.

Iranian civilization and Iran's federative system must have made some contribution to the evolution of the concept of democracy. After all, when in Babylonia Cyrus issued a proclamation or charter of which the text is now kept in British Museum. In it, he declares equality and justice for all in the realm and assumes the title of king of Babylonia, Sumer and Akai in addition to the title of king of the four quarters and king of Antaean. Similarly, Darius the Great spoke of justice in the tablets he engraved at Mount Bistun west of Iran.

Darius (Darioush) organized 20 *satrapies* each under an autonomous king assisted by a *satrap* representing the central authority of the king of kings. He fixed the tributes of each *satrapy*: appointed tribute-collectors and travelling inspectors called 'eyes and ears of the great king', to watch over the *satrap*s and commanders of armies. He introduced currencies of gold *darics* and silver

siglus facilitating trade exchange throughout the federation; built the Royal Road from Susa, northwest of the Persian Gulf, to Sardis on the Aegean Sea with branches to Persepolis and other major political and commercial centres. He ordered the map of this road and other civilized countries alongside it to be engraved on a plate of bronze[52] which must have been the first detailed geographical map in history. He established a postal service with relays of men and horses at short intervals, and caused a canal to be dug in Egypt to link the Red Sea to the Nile and, thence to the Mediterranean Sea.[53]

Around the dawn of the Christian era, the concept of territory and boundary assumes much sophistication in Iran. Political organization of the space in the Sassanid federation (AD 224–651) is marked with the development of such concepts as internal and external frontier-keeping states, buffer states, boundary pillars, etc. There is even mention in ancient literature of a river boundary between Iran and Turan in Central Asia. Not only did the Sassanids revive the Achaemenian organization of state and territory, but fashioned the term 'Iranshahr' (the country of Iran), which must have been the first time in the history of the country that the state or nation assumed a name independent of the name of ruling dynasties. The concept of justice reached its zenith in the Sassanid era in the person of Khosro Anushirvan the Just.

No doubt modern concepts of state, territory and boundary have developed in Europe since the Industrial Revolution, as Peter Taylor (1989) and others have correctly pointed out, but one can hardly overlook the fact that they are rooted in the interacting ancient civilizations. In other word, considering the extent to which Western (Graeco-Roman) civilization interacted with the Persian civilization, little doubt remains about validity of Jean Gottmann's assertion in his previously mentioned letter to this author (1987) that (ancient) 'Iran must have belonged to the "Western" part of mankind'. On the one hand, ancient Persian notions of state, territory and boundary come quite close to the contemporary forms of these concepts, which are imbedded within the framework of world-system of nation-states. On the other hand, being concerned with the universality of state as well as the notions of equality and justice for all in their commonwealth of different nations, these Iranian concepts must have contributed to the evolution of the idea of democracy in Europe. Writing on the impact of Persian political system on the Western conceptions, Fillipani-Ronconi asserts:

> The heritage handed down by Iran to the West and still living in its ideological conceptions and cultural institutions is manifold. If its patterns are sometimes difficult to recognize and trace back to their origin, that is due to the fact that this legacy has been received through intermediate cultures and westernised models ... the leading elements of what we could call the vertical organization' of the state are part of this age-old heritage. They were handed over to

the modern world through the late Roman imperial structure and its medieval renaissance.[54]

The evolution of Eastern Iranian political geography

Although Achaemenian Cyrus the Great (559 – 529 BC), founder of Iran, was killed during his eastern campaign, it was under his leadership that all lands to the west of Oxus were incorporated into the Iranian (Persian) Commonwealth of semi-independent nations that the Achaemenids had created. Cyrus the Great's campaign in the east did not, however, settle the northeastern borders of his commonwealth. The Parthians had been in contests with the Kushan Empire – of Turanic descent – to their east for a long period of time. Legends have it that raids and wars between Iran and the Turanic tribes of northeastern reached such an intolerable level at the time of the Parthian feudal empire (247 BC to AD 224) that they constructed the wall that is generally known as *Sadd-e Sekandar* (Alexander's dam). This wall was to separate Iran from Turan in order to defuse pressure from the latter.

Some political geographers argue that ancient walls, such as the Great Wall of China and Hadrian's Wall in Roman Britain were not 'boundary' lines. They were parts of much wider frontier zones, constructed solely for the purpose of separating civilizations from primitive powers.

When the Sassnid state was at its highest in Iran, new tribal movements in Central Asia caused widespread disruption in the geopolitical world of late fourth and early fifth centuries. Shapur II (AD 309 – 379), who was crowned before being born as the 'king of kings' of the Sassanid federative system, had defeated the Chionites and had even persuaded them to help him in his Roman campaigns. His death encouraged the Hepthalite Huns of the east who called themselves Kushans, to ravage northern fringes of his empire.[55]

The Chionites, the Qeidarites, the Huns and Hepthalite Huns were peoples of Indo-European origin. The arrival in Central Asia of tribes of Turkic origin in the early sixth century led to the native populations becoming completely absorbed by the newcomers. It is this mixture that Ferdosi refers to as the 'Turans'. Ferdosi, however, dates the origin of the 'Turans' to the beginning of mankind. In his legend of the geographical dispersion of man, comparable to that of biblical stories of the dispersion by the Prophet, Noah, Ferdosi asserts that Afreidun, the founding father of Iran, had three sons: Salm, Tur, and Iraj. He gave the West (Rome) to Salm, the East (Turkistan) to Tur and bestowed Iran to Iraj.[56]

If Ferdosi's epic work of literature, partly based on legends and in part on history, is to be taken as evidence, then there is no doubt that 'boundary' was first invented by the Iranians. The *Shahnameh* of Ferdosi speaks of precise land and river boundary lines between Iran and Turan at the time of Sassanid Varahram V (Bahram-e Goor, reigning from AD 421 to 439). Ferdosi reveals that at the end of Varahram's wars with the Turans the two sides agreed to

erect boundary pillars to mark their land borderlines. He does not, however, give the precise location of this boundary line. But when it came to the river boundaries, Ferdosi states that the two sides agreed to put their boundary on river Oxus (Amu-Darya = Jeihun).[57]

Historical records although verify that Varahram's eastern campaign was thoroughly successful, but his sun Pirouz (AD 459 to 484) was defeated by the Hepthalites and killed in the war. Iran was forced to pay annual tribute to the Turans until AD 557 when Khosro Anushirvan the Just (Anushah-Ravan = the immortal soul) (AD 531 to 579) felt strong enough to repudiate the agreement to pay the tribute. He allied himself with the Turks, who had recently arrived in Trans-Oxania.

> Together they utterly defeated the Hepthalite forces and divided the kingdom between themselves: the Turks took the territories north of the Oxus, while Khusrau ruled over much of Afghanistan.[58]

The post-Islamic developments

The Sassanid tradition of royal patronage of science, the arts and literature was perhaps the most important factor in the expansion of Iranian culture and tradition in the lands of Turan. One of the lasting impacts of this tradition was the successful Persianization of most parts of Central Asia and the survival of Persian language itself in Iran and Central Asia in the post-Islamic era. Quoting Ebn Bibi, Fillipani-Ronconi gives an example of the impact of Iranian culture in the lands of Turan, stating:

> . . . the historian Ibn Bibi, describing the Seljuq ruler's accession to the throne, gives an account of a number of Iranian and even Indo-Iranian traditions followed on that occasion, such as the release of Captives.[59] These attest to the overwhelming influence of Persian patterns that preserved the traits of an Indo-European protohistorical tradition.[60]

In the post-Islamic era the lands known as Turan were in the control of the eastern Turks: the Seljuqs, the Ilak Khans, the Atabaks and the Teimurids. These dynasties succeeded in thoroughly Turanizing northeastern fringes of the Iranian plateau, from what is now Kyrgyzstan in the east to Turkmenistan in the west. This Turanizing of northern fringes of the Iranian plateau continued as far west as living its marks on the peoples and territories to the west of the Caspian Sea, namely the people of Azerbaijan who adopted a highly Persianized Turkish dialect without actually being Turks or Turans by origin.

It was at the height of Iran's struggle for self-preservation in the face of the increasing Arabization of the eastern Caliphate in the fifth century AH

that a new wave of Iranian identity-seeking movements emerged in the shape of Shiite dynasties of Iranian stock with some Ismailite tendencies. These were dynasties like the Samanids, Saffarids and Deilamids. But this wave was soon challenged by a new political storm from the eastern parts of the Iranian Plateau. A number of new dynasties of Sunni persuasion and Turkish background began to expand their control over Turan and eastern parts of Iran. The Qaznavids were the first of these who were descendants of Alp Takin, a Turkish slave of the Samanid king. Though like their Seljuqid successors, the Qaznavids were different from the Iranians in their ethnic and cultural origin and somewhat alien to the Iranian civilization, they built and expanded their empire in Central Asia and Khorasan almost exclusively on the basis of Iranian culture and civilization. Their success in this regard was so immense that without physically or politically being revived, Iran became the heart of Islam. The more fascinating aspect of this was that, unlike their Qaznavid overlords, the Iranians themselves were increasingly embracing the Shiite sect of Islam at the time and fighting for the revival of their non-Arab identity at the heart of Islam. When Sultan Mahmud Qaznavid died in 1030, his kingdom stretched from Samarqand in Central Asia to Gujerat in India, from Kashmir in Pamir to Mesopotamia. Although narrow-minded, bigoted and strictly Sunni, his plans did not include founding any civilizations that were not to be both Iranian and Islamic, and with this aim he enriched his court in Ghazna (the present Afghanistan) with literary men, scientists and philosophers virtually kidnapped from every corner of his empire. The great philosopher and physician Ibn Sina (Avicenna), the scientist and historian al-Biruni, the philosopher Abu Sahl al-Masihi ('the Christian'), and the so-called pleiad consisting of such Persian poets as Onsuri, Farrokhi, Asadi,[61] and Ferdosi were sometimes his enforced guests.[62]

However fanatically Sunni and unsympathetic to the Shiites of Iran were the Qaznavid and Seljuqids of Turan, their rule in practice encouraged the rise of the spirit of Iranianism which, in turn, fenced off the domination of the Iranian Plateau by Arab or Turanic identities. Their patronage of Iranian science, arts and literature sewed the seeds for the revival of Iran as a 'nation' and/or a 'country'. It was this cultural controversy that introduced the ruling Turans to the dual life of the Iranian Plateau: on the one hand they remained alien to the spirit and civilization of Iran but on the other they found themselves obliged to propagate these same phenomenon. It was at the time of these dynasties that Iranian culture and civilization were promoted far and wide, from Trans-Oxania and India to Mesopotamia. It was at the time of these dynasties that Persian language became the second language of the World of Islam, only because the Holy Qor'ān was in Arabic, and Persian could not, therefore, become the first language of Islam. It was in their time that Iranian science, literature, arts, philosophy and Gnosticism enriched the Islamic civilization. It somehow seems as if Persianization of the world of Islam by Turanic dynasties became a tradition that survived for many

centuries. Even as late as the sixteenth century the Safavid dynasty of Iranian origin but of Azeri dialect (a Turkic language), took upon themselves to revive political Iran, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Qajarid Shahs of Turanic origin constantly endeavoured to present themselves as more Iranian than others.

It is true in the meantime that the rule of Turanic dynasties helped expansion of the Iranian spirit and civilization, the impact of centuries of their political rule Turanized the northern fringes of the Iranian Plateau – Tokharestan and Farghaneh of ancient Turan. Local clans like the Ilek Khan and Ghozz started this process, which was later reinforced by the Mongolian onslaught of AD 1217, followed by settlement in those fringes of Turkic tribes coming from east of old Turan.[63] Even in their case, the rulers, whether Teimurid, Mongolian or Sheibanid, continued to assert their spiritual adherence to Iranian civilization. But as far as the political side is concerned, there is no doubt that the Seljuq Empire represented the peak of Iranian influence on the lands of old Turan. It is sufficient to recall two names from that period: first was Nezam al-Molk, grand vazir of Sultan Malek Shah (d. 1092), one of greatest statesmen of the Moslem world. And the other was Imam Mohamad Ghazali (d. 1111), who settled once and for all the reciprocal relations between faith, mysticism and philosophy in Islam.[64]

The Mongolian invasion and its devastating consequences, particularly in the eastern parts of Iranian Plateau resulted in the downfall of the Abbasid Caliphate in Iran in AD 1257 and brought the Ismailite movements of Iran to an end. The ascent of Amir Teimur Gurkani and the extensive empire that he created in the Iranian Plateau did not help revival of Iranian civilization. Nevertheless, a number of his successors, like Shahrokh, Ologh Beig, Baisonqor and Abu Saeed, made some effort in promoting the culture and civilization of Iran in the lands of old Turan. Amir Teimur's grandson Baber (Babur), founder of great Mongolian Empire of India (which he ruled from 1483 to 1530) promoted Persian culture and Iranian civilization in the Indian sub-continent.

The revival of the Persian Empire and Iran's eastern political geography

Reviving the Persian federation in the post-Islamic era (1501), the Safavids adopted the ancient federative system, but failed to update it by strengthening political ties between the centre and outer peripheries. Adherence of the outer dependencies in the Safavid organization of the space was limited to reading the Khotbeh (public homily) in the name of the shahansha (the king of kings of all the federation), minting the coin in his name, paying annual taxes and contributing to the war efforts. Unlike in the ancient times, the Safavids failed to establish an administrative and communication system that would strengthen centre–periphery relationships in the federation. This was a powerful handicap which showed its effect in

the nineteenth century when the territorial disintegration of the Persian Empire began in the face of introduction to the East of the European concepts of state, territory and boundaries within the framework of a world-system of nation-states. When the British started in the early nineteenth century to turn the Iranian-dependent Arab tribes of the southern Persian Gulf into their protectorate Trucial States, Iran found itself bewildered and confused. When the British signed treaties of truce with those tribes on the argument of absence of definite sovereignty in southern Gulf territories, the government in Tehran limited its counter-argument to issuing official dictums declaring that it would not recognize these treaties. But a little later, when the British claimed sovereignty of the Trucial States over the Iranian islands of Tunbs and Abu Musa on the basis of no flag of identity on display in those islands, Tehran put up reasonable resistance as if it had awoken to the effectiveness of modern concepts of territoriality in the region.

However, at the time of the revival of Iranian political geography, the Safavids managed to restore the country's territorial expanses of the pre-Islamic Sassanid period. Before Russia obtained a footing on the eastern shores of the Caspian Sea, there were no fixed boundaries between the great Iranian province of Khorasan and what was left of the Turan to the north. Shah Abbas the Great initiated the practice of settling and maintaining colonies of Kurdish and other warlike tribesmen in the mountainous country in the north of Khorasan in order to keep at bay the predatory Turkmans. Nader Shah not only followed this policy actively, but also overran the whole Turkmen country, up to and including Marv (Khiveh in modern Turkmenistan) as well as subduing Bokhara and Samarqand in modern Uzbekistan. This extension of Iranian authority to the north and northeast was fleeting. On Nader Shah's assassination in June 1747, the northern slopes of the mountains of Kopet Dagh, Kuran Dagh, Kuh-e Hezar Masjed and other ranges to the southeast of these mountains, once again came to constitute the northern frontiers of Iran and what was left of the ancient Turan.

When Peter the Great began extending Russian authority to the southeast corner of the Caspian Sea, the southward shifting of Perso-Turan boundaries began. Iran's humbling defeat by the Russians in two major wars resulted in the conclusion of the treaty of Golestan in 1813 and the disastrous treaty of Turkmanchai of 21st February 1828. Not only did Iran lose extensive and valuable territories in the Caucasus under these treaties, Russia was granted the right of capitulation in Iran, which was later granted to the British and other powers. This territorial disintegration of Iran was coupled with the political decline of the country as a consequence and put Iran at the mercy of the Great Game of imperialistic geopolitics played by the Russians and the British in its east and northeastern flanks.[65] As these two treaties debarred Iran from maintaining warships flying her flag on the Caspian Sea, she was unable to cope with the piratical activities of the Turkmans on the southeast

coasts of the Caspian. Their raids became so extensive that in 1834 Tehran requested assistance from Moscow to restore order in Turkistan. This request gave Russia the opportunity of pushing its military activities within Iranian territories. They established a force on Ashuradeh Island, which was maintained for a long period of time, ostensibly to prevent Turkman raids, despite repeated protests from Iran.

The rebellion of Prince Kameran, the vassal king of Iran's dependent province of Herat in early 1830s, coincided with the lawlessness in federal Iran's other dependencies in Turkistan. Rebellion in Marv, Bokhara, Khiveh and other countries of the Turkman and Uzbek peoples intensified, and they 'then continued depredation in Asterabad[66] and the neighbouring districts'.[67] The Iranian government of Haj Mirza Aghasi prepared two expeditions in 1836: one against Herat and the other against Marv, Khiveh and Bokhara, which was to proceed to the northeast after Herat was subdued. The expedition against Herat agitated Sir John McNeil, British minister in Tehran, who suspended Anglo-Iranian relations and left Iran in protest. British military undertaking against Iran in 1837 frustrated Iran's military expeditions in the east and northeast, and reassured the Russians of Iran's complete political decline. This development encouraged the Russians to push their frontiers southward to include all of Turkistan and Central Asia. Hence, while Sir John McNeil was advising the British Indian Empire to help the separation of Herat from Iran and to create state of Afghanistan to act as a buffer zone between India and a Russo-Iranian aggression that he suspected, Russia was busy carving up Iran's dependent territories in Central Asia.

In 1869, when Russia seized Qezel-Su (which she renamed Krasnovodsk, the Russian equivalent of the Turkish name) and Balkhan Bay, Iran protested and asked what was the purpose of constructing a fort at Krasnovodsk. Tehran also asked Moscow for an assurance that Russia would not interfere with the Yamut Turkmans who inhabited the country round the mouth of the Atrak and Gorgan Rivers. In reply, Russia acknowledged Iran's authority as far north as the mouth of the Atrak.[68] The Iranian government acquiesced, as they were under the impression that the Russian claim to the territory north of the Atrak applied only to a coastal strip extending no more than 30 or 40 miles inland.

However, by the mid-nineteenth century when British India was creating Afghanistan in the eastern territories of the waning Persian Empire, imperial Russian forces were busy conquering territories of Turkic Kazakhs beyond Iran's northeastern limits. They pushed southward in spite of stiff resistance by the Uzbeks and other *khanats* of Central Asia who wanted to maintain the status quo. In 1866 the Russians took the Persian-dependent *khanats* or principalities of Khojand and Bokhara, and forced the latter to become a vassal state dependent of the Russian Empire in 1868. The Persian-dependent *khanat* of Khiveh fell in 1873, and the Russians formally annexed

Qukan in 1876. These territories were transformed into five Central Asian republics after the Soviet Union rose into power in place of the Russian Empire in the early twentieth century. Turkmenistan became a Soviet republic in 1924, Uzbekistan in 1924, Tajikistan in 1929 with Khojand and the rest of Farghaneh Valley being transferred to it. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan became Soviet republics in 1936. With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 all these republics assumed their independence and joined the United Nations as independent states.

The Iran–Turkmenistan frontiers of friendship and cooperation

Relations improved with the Soviet Union in the mid-1960s after Iranian and Soviet leaders met in Moscow in June 1965 and settled border differences. A new line of boundary demarcation on both sides of the Caspian Sea put an end to the border differences between the two countries. Under the new and improved relations an economic cooperation agreement made it possible for Iranian natural gas to be piped to the Soviet Union in return for the construction in Iran of a steel mill at Isfahan by the Soviets. The Soviet prime minister recalls:

> We invited the Shah to negotiate with us. We made considerable concessions to Iran on the disputed border. Some of their claims we compromised on, and others we satisfied completely. We signed a protocol establishing a mutually acceptable line of demarcation on the map. We were pleased to have liquidated one of the major obstacles, which had stood in the way of good Soviet–Iranian relations.[69]

Subsequently, a number of joint-venture investments on utilization of water from border rivers took place between the two countries. Relations improved further in the wake of the Islamic Revolution of Iran, which put an end to the Soviet Union's anxieties over Iran's close cooperation with the United States. An agreement signed between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the waning Soviet Union in 1991 permitted freedom of cross-border travel by ethnic Azeri and Turkman populations up to 45 miles on either sides of the two countries' boundaries.[70] Earlier on (15th February 1990) a Memorandum of Understanding was concluded between the two countries whereby 11 transit points were selected on the borderlines, four of which were in the northeastern border areas.

The emergence of the republic of Turkmenistan, in Central Asia, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, marked a new chapter and a turning-point in Iran's relations with the country on her northeastern flank. The new country that emerged to represent the ancient Turan and medieval Turkistan in the twenty-first century began its relations with Iran on the

basis of appreciation of cross-border cooperation. Many agreements of friendship and economic cooperation have been signed between Iran and the new republic that has replaced the Soviet Union to the northeast. In June 1995 Turkmenistan signed a tripartite agreement with Iran and Armenia to expand overland trade among the three.[71] March that year witnessed inauguration of the linking of Turkmenistan and Central Asian railway networks to those of Iran. These railway networks were hooked up in March 1996.[72] Expansion of cross-border cooperation led to the inauguration in December 1997 by the presidents of Iran and Turkmenistan of a new gas pipeline between the two countries.[73]

No matter what was done to Iran's northeastern territories and frontiers by the Russians in the beginning and subsequently by the Soviets, border areas and the boundaries inherited from them by the republic of Turkmenistan with Iran, have proved to be stable and reliable. These frontiers have proved to be the frontiers of friendship and cooperation between the two nations.

2

SMALL PLAYERS

The Khozeimeh family

Introduction

The small players of the Great Game included many local principalities and amirdoms of Eastern Iran, the *khanats* of Central Asia, and local dynasties such as the Abdalis of Afghanistan and the Khozeimehs of Khorasan and Sistan. The Abdalis of Afghanistan played a substantial role in the politics of the Persian Empire, especially in the last days of the Safavid dynasty when Abdali leaders like Mahmud and Ashraf brought the dynasty to its end in an internal Iranian uprising. They and the *khanats* of Central Asia became very active in the process of the Great Game, using the existing circumstances in Central Asia and Afghanistan to their advantage in trying to establish their independent kingdoms. The *khanats* of Central Asia are well introduced in other works of historical and geographical studies of Greater Khorasan (Central Asia and Afghanistan). The other local dynasty that played a substantial role as one of the small players in the Great Game with consequential impact on the formation of the political geography of the entire region, namely, the Khozeimeh dynasty of Khorasan and Sistan, will be discussed in two chapters. I introduce the amirs of Khozeimeh dynasty in this chapter, whereas their foreign relations will be discussed in Chapter 3.

But before engaging in the main discussion, it is perhaps of some significance to note that the term *amir* or *emir*, as some British texts prefer, is Arabic, with extensive use in lands of Persian culture, and literally means 'commander'. Within its Persian context, however, the term constitutes a self-made position long since disappeared, entailing a wide range of political titles, such as the leader, the governor, the ultimate judge in the district, commander of forces, defender of territory and protector of the inhabitants, and ruler of the region. In short, it means 'the vassal king' of classic description. In most cases the amirs were self-appointed and had created their own autonomy by gradually expanding their area of influence and their semi-independent authority or realm, which generally became known as the amirdom. The power of such amirs, inherited by their descendants, was naturally assumed. In some cases it was further strengthened where amirs

were officially designated as ruler of their own realm by the king of kings in the ancient Persian federative system. Thus, within the Persian system, theirs was a two-tier power: the natural power and the official title. These descriptions were most applicable to rule in the Khozeimeh state in Eastern Iran. Moreover, because of the exceptional length of the Khozeimeh amirs' rule in the vast areas of Eastern Iran, stretching from Khorasan in the north, to Sistan and Baluchistan in the south, I propose to refer to their state and rule in that region as the 'Khozeimeh amirdom'.

The Khozeimeh players of the Great Game

The origins of the Khozeimeh family

Almost all works of legendary history both in Persian and English, limited as they are, describe the Khozeimeh family as being of Arab origin of the pre-Islamic Khozayya tribe.

Historically, however, the root of the family can be traced to a khazem or 'Hazem' bin Khozeimeh, a commander of the early Abbasid Caliphs who was dispatched by Caliph Mansour to put down the revolt in Sistan of Ostad of Sis aided by a certain Harish Sistani. Upon his arrival in Qohestan, the district to the north of Sistan, Khazem bin Khozeimeh succeeded in quelling the revolt. He remained in the region and founded a dynasty of amirs who ruled the area for over 1200 years. The family gradually adopted the name 'Khozeimeh' and was so known until the time of the Afshar and Qajar dynasties, when at least three amirs of the family, each named 'Alam', played significant roles in the region. The glory of the roles played by two of those three amirs led to the adoption of the name 'Alam' by a branch of the family in the first half of the twentieth century. To the present, different branches of the family have adopted the surnames 'Khozeime' or 'Khozeimeh', 'Khozeimeh Alam' and 'Alam'. Writing on the Arab origin of the family, Sir Percy Sykes goes as far as saying:

> Although they have kept no record, they believe themselves to be of Arab descent, and the Khuzaia or Khuzaima tribe, which was ruled by Tahir the Ambidexter, a doughty warrior, who set Mamun on the Caliph's seat. Apparently forced to emigrate from Bahrain, they gradually became the ruling family of Kain, the districts of Neh and Bandan first falling under their control, when they marched up from the south.[1]

The more enlightened members of the family today, however, dispute their Arab origin. Nonetheless, there is little historical evidence decisively supporting either argument. One of the historical documents this author has come across, which supports the argument of the modern branch of the

family, is a rare book *History of Islam in Iran* by Abbas Khalili in Persian. Using numerous documents of early Islamic centuries, Khalili describes Khazem bin Khozeimeh as a victorious commander of Iranian stock. He asserts:

> ... for the first time, a commander of Khorasani origin, who was living in Iraq, close to the Abbasid Caliphate, changed his views and stripped the Caliph of his title in an announcement and returned to Iran. He was Basam bin Ebrahim ... Abul-Abbas Saffah appointed Khazem bin Khozeimeh as commander of a specially selected force, and he pursued the former as far as the mountains of Iran killing many of his supporters.[2]

Khalili then explains:

> When passing through the village of Bani Hareth who had the honour of being related to the Caliph, Khazem, an arrogant general, expected courtesy from them. As they were from the Clan of the Caliph's mothers, did not pay respect to him. To find an excuse for punishment, he asked why had not they arrested and killed such and such outlawed who had passed through their villages. They said: 'we do not know of such person'. Khazem destroyed their houses, massacred them all, and looted their belongings. Their tribe complained to the Caliph and almost succeeded in convincing the Caliph to kill Khazem. However, commanders of the Khorasan divisions intervened and prevented it. He was, thus, sent to Oman where he successfully regained possession of a number of islands from the Khawarej and that story is outside of this subject. From this calamity the extent of power and pride and daringness of the Khorasanis can be measured. How they used to take revenge of the Arabs and how did they kill them for what kind of excuses. Even the relatives and associated of the Caliph did not escape their vengeance, and this event is an example of the other important events taking place in Khorasan and in central Iran where the Arabs were destroyed group by group.

On the revolt of Abdoj-Jabar bin Abdor-Rahman against Caliph Mansour in Khorasan and Khazem's action, Khalili asserts:

> ... as Mansour reviewed the gravity of the situation, he found no alternative but to send his heir Mohammad Mehdi, later a Caliph himself, to Iran to reside there and to maintain security of his surroundings in Khorasan, Deylaman, and Tabarestan. To put down Abdoj-Jabar's revlolt, Khazem bin Khozeimeh, the famous warrior, was assigned and he captured the enemy and sent him to Mansour, mounted back to front on a camel.[3]

Khazem bin Khozeimeh had also commanded the forces of Abu-Moslem Khorasani (Hormozan), according to the same document:

> ... it is noteworthy that when Abu-Moslem Khorasani turned against the Caliphate, the commanders and the soldiers supporting him were all of the Iranian stock.[4] Abu-Moslem sent messages to Hasan bin Qahtabah, commander of the right wing of the army to weaken that flank of the battalion by sending as many men as possible to the left flank commanded by Khazem bin Khozeimeh.

This tactic had apparently led to the victory of Abu-Moslem over the Caliphate forces. Yet, the same book reports that shortly after this event Khazem bin Khozeimeh fought on the side of the Caliph again. It states: 'Sanbad the Zoroastrian revolted in Khorasan against the Caliph to avenge the murder of Abu-Moslem. He was subsequently defeated. The other notable Iranian known as 'Ostad of Sis' revolted against the Caliph.'[5]

A highly acclaimed Islamic history book, *Tarikh-e Tabari* says of this revolt:

> When Ostad of Sis revolted, he successfully captured most of Khorasan, and Mansour saw no alternative but to quell the fire by a fire of the same flame, and to wash the blood of the Khorasanis with the blood of the Khorasanis themselves. He, therefore, dispatched a well-equipped army of Iranians commanded by Khazem Bin Khozeimeh Marvrudi, whose name has repeatedly been mentioned here, to fight the Ostad of Sis. At that time Mehdi, the Crown of Prince of the Caliph, was living in Iran. Ostad of Sis had captured Khorasan with an army of three hundred thousand people of Herat, Sistan, and Bad Qeis. A furious war broke out in the vicinity of Marvrud and many famous commanders of Ostad were killed, including Abul-Nam. Sistani and Davud bin Garaz and Ma'az bin Salim. Cities were recaptured one after the other. After Sanbad, this event was the biggest war between the Caliph and the Iranian independence seekers.[6]

The fact stated in this document that Khazem ben Khozeimeh was sent to Oman, confirms that statement by Sir Percy Sykes that he was 'forced to emigrate from Bahrain'. It is noteworthy that the entire southern coasts of the Persian Gulf were generally referred to, by the old Islamic historians and geographers, as 'Bahrain' to the west and Oman to the east. In other words, it is logical to assume that Khazem ben Khozeimeh was sent by, the Caliph, to fight the Khavarej forces of the eastern section of the region 'Oman'. He defeated them and proceeded towards west 'Bahrain', from where he was forced to leave. This whole theory corresponds with the historical record

Tarikh-e Tabari, which speaks of Khazem ben Khozeimeh as a general of the Abol-Abbas Saffah around the years 132–136 AH (AD 749–754), Originally from Marvrud of Khorasan, who was sent, by the Caliph, to fight the Khavarej in Oman.[7] Note that some of the early eighteenth century local history, such as *Kashfal-Ghemmah* (1874:116) speak of small tribe in the vicinity of al-Salayf and al-Sirr named as 'Khuzeimeh bin Hazm'. There is strong possibility that the tribe was related to Khuzeimeh Bin Khazem.[8] Moreover, Tarikh-e Tabari speaks of a Khozeimeh and his son Khazem who had been ruling Khorasan about a century earlier. These historical records mention a Khazem who was the *vali* or governor of Khorasan. His son, Abdullah, had two sons; Mohammad, who was sent by Abdullah to Herat as Amir of that district; and Khozeimeh, who succeeded Abdullah in Khorasan and Qohestan. These events took place in the years 64 to 66 AH (684–686 AD) when Marvan I Ommayyad was on the throne of the Caliphateship.[9] This must be the actual origin of the Khozeimeh dynasty of Qaenat as, Tarikh Tabari asserts: 'The (Omayyad Caliph of the time) said to Salim ben Ziad; Oh Abu-Harb, I would like to give you the job of your brothers Abdur-Rahman and Abbad. He then was made the governor of Sistan and Khorasan.'[10]

This document, however, mentions that when Salim left for Khorasan, he was accompanied by a number of dignitaries, including 'Khazem ben Salmi', possibly his own son. Was he the first Khozeimeh Amir succeeding Salim ben Ziad and founding the Khozeimeh dynasty of Qohestan? This appears to be the case.

Interviewed by this author, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam dismissed the idea of Arab origin of the family arguing:

1. The Khozeimehs have been Shi'ite Moslems unlike other Arab amirs throughout the world of Islam who were normally of Sunni persuasion.[11]
2. The Khozeimeh Amirs have proved themselves, throughout the history of being Iranian patriots with strong attachment to Iranianism which has never had precedence among the Arab amirs of the Islamic realms.
3. There is a small settlement of Arab families near the town of Birjand, the seat of Khozeimeh amirdom, towards whom the Khozeimeh amirs have never extended any special favour or support.
4. No sign of regionalism of separatist nature is indicated in the history of this family, which again is totally out of character for the Arab amirs of Iran.

As a life-time reader of Persian Gulf affairs, this author could not help unintentionally compare, throughout this research work, the Khozeimeh amirdom with such emirates as those of the Persian Gulf, especially the

al Khalifah of Bahrain who descended on that Iranian frontier state and created the separate emirate of Bahrain, eventually assuming independence from both Iran and Britain.

The Khozeimeh amirdom was also situated on the remote frontier areas of Iran and, like Bahrain, it also fell at the crossroad of Anglo-Russian and Anglo-Iranian geopolitical rivalries. The Khozeimehs not only did not pursue a political path that would guarantee them a similar outcome as it did for the al Khalifah of Bahrain, but they also displayed maximum loyalty to Iran and its central government, and actively influenced the boundary delimitation between Iran and Afghanistan in favour of Iran. Such an attitude would indeed be out of character for an amirdom of non-Iranian origin.

Based on what historical records of early Islamic centuries indicate, I am of the opinion that the Khozeimeh family was of Iranian origin from the lands of Khorasan. The fact that their early ancestors fought in various parts of the Islamic empire for the Caliphate and then returned to Khorasan has led some historians of more modern times to assume that they were Arabs. What these historians brushed aside is that the family's ancestors left Khorasan in the first place and that they were originally from Marvrud.

Finally, it must be noted that tracing ones origin to the Arab tribes, if not to the prophet of Islam himself, was a common practice until as late as the turn of the twentieth century in some parts of Iran and Central Asia. However, just what happened to the family, following their settlement in Khorasan, remains obscure. There are a number of theories concerning this, the most commonly accepted one is that with the rise into power of Taher Zolyaminain (Ambidexter) in Khorasan, the Khozeimeh power was wiped out alongside all other regional dynasties, especially if they were of Shi'ite persuasion. Ayati argues in *Baharestan*:

> At the time of Mamun (Abbasid Caliph) the political rivalries made Taher Zolyaminain, himself once a local Amir – Subservient to the Arab amirdoms of the region – to subdue these families, especially if they were on Shi'ah persuasion. Hence, there is no mention of this family in the history of those times.[12]

The overwhelming weakness of this argument is that, not only is there no historical evidence supporting the idea that Taher had wiped out the Khozeimeh dynasty but also, Ayati introduces no evidence as to who the Khozeimeh amirs of the time of Taher were. Ayati claims that the Khozeimeh amirs of that era were Shi'ite Moslems without knowing exactly who they were and what their names would have been. Paradoxically, there are theories suggesting that Taher Zolyaminain himself was a Khozeimeh amir, and that the amirs of this family, from the ninth century AD onward were his descendants. A well-known Iranian scholar, Ali-Asghar Hekmat,[13] asserts:

> Unwritten traditions trace the origin of this (Khozeimeh) family to Taher Zolyaminain, the renowned Khorasani general who put Mamun on the seat of Caliphateship[14] and, thus, secured for himself the amirdom of Khorasan and Trans-Oxenia. The Shahs of the Taherid Dynasty was the first Iranian vassal kings and amirs who established an independent kingdom (in post-Islamic Iran). Taher's origin is traced by some historians to Bahram Chubineh,[15] the famous general of Khosro Parviz the Sassanid Shahansha.

This theory is reflected, albeit vaguely, in Sir Percy Sykes's writings, part of which has been quoted earlier in these pages, specifically where he says: 'They believe themselves to be of Arab origin, and of the Khuzai or Khozaima tribe, which was ruled by Taher the Ambidexter, a doughty warrior who set Mamun on the Calpih's seat.'[16]

This theory, however, does not correspond with what is indicated in the *Tarikh-e Tabari*. According to these historical records, when Taher ben Hussein the Zolyaminein was preparing for war with Mohammad ben Harun in 198 AH (813 AD), he wrote to Khozeimeh bin Khazem (in Qohestan) that 'if he succeeded in this war against Mohammad, and Khozeimeh had no role in the attainment of that victory, he would not hesitate in overthrowing the latter'.[17] Upon receiving this note of warning, Khozeimeh apparently declared his loyalty to Taher. Khozeimeh, however, according to the said document, played a significant role in Taher's campaign against Mohammad ben Harun and won himself such a reputation that Hussein Khali'e, a famous poet of the time, versified him by saying: 'Khozeimeh has obliged us all, As the lord has quelled the fire of war through him . . .'[18]

This evidence leaves no doubt that the Khozeimehs were Amirs of Qaenat at the time, that they were of Khorasani origin and that Taher was not a member of the family.

The modern branch of the family

When the Safavid fortune overwhelmed the entire Iranian Plateau and the largest empire of post-Islamic Iran emerged, the Khozeimeh's also seem to have regained their former glory and fortune. Their amirdom (of Qaenat) was once again recognized as a *velayat* (province) in the political organization of Iran. The Khozeimeh Amirs once again started to rule sizeable parts of the empire and were officially recognized as autonomous frontier-keeping amirs. Apart from all else, the fact that the Safavid Shahs were of Shi'ite persuasion attracted Khozeimeh amirs' maximum loyalty. They remained loyal to the Safavids even after the assassination of Nader Shah Afshar, which offered the possibility of restoration of the Safavid dynasty. Nader Shah took the province of Qaen and restored it, with the blessing of Shah Tahmasp II Safavid, to Amir Esmail Khan Khozeimeh.[19]

He was the son of Amir Ebrahim Khan (died 1699) who was the son of Amir Mohammad Khan.[20] Amir Esmail Khan is regarded as the first Khozeimeh Amir of the present family line known to historians of modern times. It is, however, hard to believe that a dynasty regained their rule, in the same district, after an interruption of about nine centuries, a period starting from the Abbasid Caliphateship of Mamun, and ending with the last Safavid Shah. I am of the opinion that there was no interruption in the rule of the dynasty. Even Marco Polo refers in his itinerary to the kingdom of 'Tunacain', a direct reference to an autonomous dynasty in Tin and Qaen.[21] The reason for the obscurity of the history of the dynasty in the pre-Safavid centuries is that the dynasty in Qaenat (Old Qohestan) attracted little attention, mainly owing to two interrelated factors:

1 With the consolidation of the Abbasid Caliphate in Iran, those provincial chiefs who adhered to the Caliphate did little more than nothing that would attract any attention.
2 The entire history of this period is devoted to the successive regional powers revolting against the Caliphate of Baghdad and/or against other outside forces invading Iran and dominating the country in the post-Islamic era, including the Mongolians and Tartars.

The Khozeimeh dynasty, traditionally loyal to the central authorities of the country, naturally had little reason, throughout this period of nine centuries or so, to attract the attention of historians preoccupied with recording massive upheavals occurring throughout the country in this period. Nevertheless, accidentally, in historical records, we sometimes come across the names of some Amirs of Qohestan who must have been members of the same dynasty, as no other dynasty has been recorded to have ruled the district and no change of governorship from one dynasty to another has been recorded or even suggested in this frontier-keeping province since Khazem Ben Salmi and Khozeimeh ben Khazem arrived in Khorasan. In the historical literatures of the thirteenth century AD, we come across one of these names. That is an Amir Naser ad-Din, Mohtasham of Qohestan[22] whose name has entered in history solely because Khajeh Nasir ad-Din Tusi,[23] the renowned Vazir of Mongolian Holaku Khan (mid-thirteenth century) dedicated to and named after that Amir of Qaenat or Qohestan, his famous book *Akhlaq-e Naseri*. Another such name is that of Amir Sultan who had contacted Shah Esmail, the founder of the Safavid dynasty (1501–1786), and was given the official title of Amir of Qaen by the said Shah. The sixteenth-century Historian, Qazi Mohammad Qazvini records:

> Monday 25, Moharram 921 AH [12th March 1515 AD] the radiance of his [Shah Esmail's] glory arrived in Ujan where he went to circumambulate the Safavid shrine [tomb of Sheikh Safi ad-Din].

> Then he returned to mountainous country of Sahand. Amir Sultan Saheb of Qaen[24] reached the feet of the mighty throne and reported a short account of the desolate state of Khorasan.
>
> Also Divan Sultan arrived from Balkh and confirmed those accounts. Hence, the kingdom of Khorasan, from the banks of the River Amir to Semnan was entrusted to His ... Majesty's *nayebs*,[25] Amir Sultan was given the assignment of *laleh* [guardianship][26] and title of 'Khan' and was sent back to Khorasan with the amirdom of Qaen.[27]

This Amir Sultan must have been of the Khozeimeh dynasty. There are at least three reasons supporting the idea: Firstly, he has the title 'Amir', which was almost exclusive to this family in that part of the country at that particular time; secondly, he is described as the 'Saheb' or owner of Qaen, which is a clear reference to the family's long and vast land ownership in the entire region and their governorship of the district; thirdly, he is given the title 'Khan' which did not appear after the names of those members of the dynasty mentioned before him but did appear after the name of all Khozeimeh amirs after him.

The Khozeimeh amirdom in recent centuries

Under the Safavids, Qaen and Sistan were separate *ayalats* (provinces). Immediately after Shah Esmail I overwhelmed the forces of Shibak Khan near Marv in AD 1510, Malek Mahmud Sistani, local governor of Sistan from the Keyani dynasty, arrived in Herat and declared his loyalty to Shah Esmail.[28] His dominion included Neh, Qal'eh-gah, Hash and Garmsirat Hirmand, with its capital city of Nimruz.[29] Shah Esmail first bestowed the governorship of Sistan on him and sent him back to the province with an army of a thousand Turkmans under the command of a Qezelbash Amir as his assistant.

This Qezelbash Amir is not named in the said document, but he could have been the same Amir Sultan Khan, or another member of the Khozeimeh family. At the time of Shah Tahmasp I (1563–1576) the governorship of Qaen was with his brother Ebrahim Mirza (1563–1566), but no name of the *laleh* or guardian, who would have been a local Amir, appears in the history books. The governors of the *ayalats* were mainly in charge of the armed forces, paying them from the endowments of the district. Sistan was a separate *ayalat* in that period. Sultan Hussein Mirza, a nephew of Shah Tahmasp I[30] was appointed as governor of Sistan (1555–1558) followed by Badi oz-Zaman Mirza, another nephew of the Shah[31] who was a minor and under the guardianship of Emam Qoli Khan Mossellu Turkman, and then, Teimur Khan Estajlu.[32]

Until 1577/8 Sistan was governed by the Qezelbash amirs. Shah Abbas I (1558–1629) gave Sistan to the governor of Kerman after repossessing Sistan

from the Keyanis. The Sistani chiefs renewed their allegiance to the Shah, where it remains to this day.

Nader Shah Afshar pursued a completely different course of policies in this regard. Instead of assigning his close relatives to the governorship of provinces and districts, he would capture the districts if needed, and return their administration to their traditional amirs or governors in return for their undivided loyalty. This policy seems to have worked to a great extent, especially in the case of Qaen and Sistan. One such amir was Amir Esmail Khan Khozeimeh, who was given the governorship of Qaen, Farah and Koh-kiluyeh in the Fars province. It was from this time that Khozeimeh amirdom appears once again on the political map of Iran. The amirdom gradually expanded to include Sistan and parts of northern Baluchistan. During the career of Amir Alam Khan I, the amirdom reached its peak. It expanded far beyond the traditional limits of Qaenat and Sistan. It included, albeit for a short period, such significant areas and cities as Mashhad and Herat (1748). The amirdom, at that time, included Mashhad and its dependencies to the north, Herat and its dependencies to the northeast, Farah and dependencies to the east, and Tun and Tabas to the west.

The southern outposts being in the central areas of Baluchistan, Qaen and Birjand, the traditional heartland of the amirdom formed the political centres. The amirdom shrank in might and size in the wake of Amir Alam Khan's demise, and was limited at most times to Qaenat and Sistan until the early twentieth century, when it expanded once again to include Baluchistan. Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk's successful campaign against frequent raids of the surrounding districts by Baluchi chiefs almost coincided with Dust Mohammad Khan's insurgency in Baluchistan, on the one hand, and rise into power in Tehran of Reza Khan Sardarsepah as Minister of War on the other. Reza Khan (later Reza Shah Pahlavi) knew of Amir Shokat al-Molk for his role in settling Colonel Mohammad Taghi Khan's uprising in Mashhad (1921) and later became acquainted with the Amir during the latter's visit to Tehran in 1921/2. He assigned the Amir to put down Dust Mohammad Khan's insurgency.[33] In a telegraph to the capital dated 21st April 1302 AH (AD 1923), Amir Shokat al-Molk suggests that 'the armed forces of Qaenat and Sistan should take responsibility for campaign in half of the Baluchistan district known as Sarhad, and Qal'eh-e Khash'.[34] These areas of Baluchistan remained under Amir Shokat al-Molk's rule and were for a short period of time the latest addition to the Khozeimeh amirdom.

The power base of the amirdom

The Khozeimeh amirdom's power was both of a natural and an official nature. Its natural power was traditionally assumed and lasted for several centuries. The amirs were self-appointed in the Iranian tradition of statehood. The

legitimacy of this self- appointment is justified by the same tradition that has justified legitimacy of the ruling authorities of Iran throughout her history. Whenever the vast country of Iran was divided into administrative districts, the natural amirdom of Khozeimeh remained unscathed. The division of the eastern areas of the country always corresponded with the natural state of the Khozeimeh amirdom, and almost all other amirdoms for that matter. Hence, the Khozeimeh Amirs always received the official title of 'governor' from the central authorities. This title or assignment was the basis for their official power, in effect reinforcing their natural power. Contrary to what is generally believed, land ownership was not the only or even the main source of this amirdom's power, though ownership of agricultural lands and water resources strengthened their power base. The main base of the Khozeimeh power in Qaenat, Southern Khorasan, Sistan and Northern Baluchistan was their historical entitlement to the amirdom recognized by the central power throughout the post-Islamic history of Iran until the early twentieth century. This historical rule together with the strategic situation of the amirdom and its role as a frontier-keeping state formed the basis for the continued power of the Khozeimeh dynasty. A European observer notes:

> The case is of general interest for two reasons. The first that the Amirs of Kain are among the few remaining hereditary governors in Persia, and they are perhaps the only instance of a family, without royal blood and with no tribal chieftainship, retaining through many generations, by wealth and local influence, their administrative powers over a considerable district. The second reason is that Birjand, their present seat of Government, being midway on the route from Russia through Khurasan to India, has in the past frequently been a scene of rivalry and covert contention for influence between the representatives of England and Russia. The town itself was allocated in 1907 by the two powers as being within the British sphere of influence, of which it marked the northeastern limit. This rivalry, though hushed by the greater business of the war, continues even now on friendly lines as between Khurasan and Sistan, or between Petrograd and Simla.
>
> To keep his position, in the altered state of Persia, the governor of kain has to maintain his authority and popularity with the people, to act in concert with the views of England and Russia, and to placate the court at Tehran.[35]

The Khozeimeh amirs ruled the largest part of eastern Iran for several centuries. Their role, as the rulers, the leaders, the ultimate district judges, the defenders of the territory, the protectors of the people and the promoters of various regional services deepened the roots of their influence in the societies of their amirdom. This historical power of the family was much

greater than the power they might have assumed through ownership of their agricultural state.[36]

As the family expanded, the land-ownership and water holdings of the amirdom broke down through inheritance into smaller units. Yet this had no impact on the power of the amirdom. Though Khorasan on the one hand, and Sistan and Baluchistan on the other, were considered in the modern political arrangements as two different provinces, the unity of Khozeimeh amirdom of Qaenat (in Khorasan) and Sistan remained unaffected by these divisions. The rise of Reza Shah Pahlavi to power in 1921 and his accession to the throne of Iran in 1925 brought a sweeping change in the affairs of the state. The Khozeimeh Amir of the time, Amir Shokat al-Molk II, in rivalry with his nephew, Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III, signed a peace treaty with the latter in 1921 and subsequently proceeded to Tehran where he was appointed as a cabinet minister. It was Reza Shah's policy to keep influential figures of different regions away from their traditional dominion.[37]

Shokat al-Molk's nephew, resigned in 1937 from the governorship of Qaen thus, officially bringing the amirdom to its end. The Khozeimeh amirdom thereafter, was but a nominal entity. It is noteworthy, however, that the land reform of the 1960s made little difference to the position of the family because of the breakdown of their land estate through the process of inheritance.[38]

The strategic location of the amirdom

The Khozeimeh amirdoms of Qaenat and Sistan, situated at the gateway to nineteenth-century British India, was of extreme importance to the British, whose main preoccupation in the nineteenth century was to obstruct spread of Russian or other European powers' eastward influence. This geographical situation was, for a considerable length of time, the setting for rivalry and contention for influence between representatives of Britain and Russia, both of which had opened consulates at Birjand where they could monitor the events in the amirdom. Birjand itself was allocated, by the 1907 Anglo-Russian treaty, as being within the British sphere of influence in Iran, of which it marked the northeastern limit.[39] Yet the Russians maintained their consulate there owing to the strategic significance of the amirdom.

The Russian consulate retained only an escort of a few Cossacks, whereas the British consulate maintained a regular military force in the amirdom. This force was recruited from the tribesmen, stock-raisers and cultivators of the Sistan and frontier districts.[40]

The spreading German influence in Iran at the threshold of both world wars was an addition to the existing rivalries of the European powers in the region. When, in 1915, the British Consulate was closed in Isfahan, British influence there was replaced by that of the Germans. They began to send their emissaries east and southwards. An English observer's account of this matter states:

> . . . they have had fair success already, as several hundred emissaries from Germany and Austria have necessitated the sending of some thousands of British and Russian troops to Persia for the protection of our interests, when these troops might have been profitably employed elsewhere.[41]

These rivalries in Qaenat caused many problems for the amirdom. One such problem resulted in the dismissal of the Amir of Qaenat and his exile to Tehran in early 1916. Iran had declared neutrality in the First World War, but Iranian soil was the arena of great rivalries between European powers, which eventually led to the division of the country in 1907, into the British and Russian spheres of influence, with the Khozeimeh amirdom in the zone of British interest. To preserve his position in the confusion of the war years, the Amir (in this instance, Amir Shokat al-Molk II), had to maintain his authority and popularity with the people; to act in concert with the views of Britain and Russia; to observe neutrality in the eyes of the Germans; and to keep the Imperial Court at Tehran happy. Early in 1916 a group of German emissaries, led by 'Nider Myer', crossed the Kavir desert and entered Qaenat district. The British Consul at Birjand, Major Prideaux, exerted much pressure on the Amir to arrest them and put them in the custody of his consulate. Aware of Iran's declared neutrality in the war, the Amir refused to comply. Neither did he pay any attention to the orders for the arrest of the Germans received from Tehran in the form of a telegraph in Latin, through Indo-European telegraph line, which seemingly he did not believe to be authentic. Threatened by Major Prideaux with removed from the office and accused of being a 'Germanophile', the Amir re-stated his position of neutrality in accordance with the wartime policies of his country. The angry consul complained to his embassy in Tehran, and it was shortly afterwards that Amir Shokat al-Molk was removed from the governorship of Qaenat, summoned to Tehran, and replaced by his nephew, Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh, the Amir of Sistan.

The administration and armed forces of the amirdom

The power of the amirdom was executed through an administration system hardly developed from its traditional form. A relatively unsophisticated administration was directly accountable to the Amir himself as the head of the state, and in his absence, to his *nayeb* or deputy. The Amir was aided by a *pishkar* (administrator); in charge of the affairs of the state and a *mostofi* in charge of the family state and endowments. The family state constituted considerable agricultural lands, water-holdings and a number of building and castles, etc. Each property (agricultural land and water source) created by the family, was registered in the traditional Iranian system, as a six *dongs* unit, regardless of the actual size or value. Of these six *dongs*, one *dong* would

be allocated to the endowments, the revenue from which was to finance religious establishments, schools and other public services. Thus, the endowments alone consisted sizeable states administered also by the *mostofi* in charge of the family state. The *pishkar* in charge of the affairs of the amirdom, was assisted by *monshis* (secretaries or clerks), whose number varied from time to time, in accordance with the size of the state. They were designated to supervise varied branches of the administration tasks. The district centres were administered by the *nayebs* (Nayeb al-Hokumeh) or deputy governors who, in turn, were accountable to the Amir. The *mostofis* of the *nayebs* were administrators of the affairs of their districts, accountable to the *nayebs*. In charge of the villages were the *kadkhodas* (headmen) who reported to the *nayebs* or their *mostofis*. In addition to these, a *kargozar* (head of diplomacy or foreign affairs), assigned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran, was in residence in the amirdom and supervised the foreign affairs in connection with the British and Russian consulates in the amirdom. Similarly, in residence was a *pishkar-e daraei* (representative of the Ministry of Finance) in charge of the revenue of the amirdom. It is noteworthy that these *pishkars* used to be assigned to the provincial centres. But, in this instance, there were two Finance Ministry *pishkars* in Khorasan province; one in Mashhad, the provincial capital, and one in Birjand, the seat of the amirdom.

Both these government officials, the *kargozar* and the *Pishkar*, were paid by the amirdom and were, in effect, members of the amirdom's administration. Whenever there was an Amir in residence in Sistan a similar administration set up would also be created for that important part of the amirdom, ultimately reported to the administration of the amirdom in Birjand.

Though officially a part of Khorasan province, the Khozeimeh amirdom had, in practice, nothing to do with Mashhad. It conducted its affairs semi-independently and reported to Tehran on general principles. The main base of the power of the amirdom in eastern parts of Iran was the family's historical entitlement to the amirdom of Qaenat. Official recognition of this traditional entitlement to the frontier-keeping amirdom of Qaenat by the central power of Iran added force to the legitimization of this entitlement. Thus, theirs was a two-fold legitimization: the traditional amirdom inherited successively by the mail descendants, and official recognition of this entitlement by Iran's central government.

The defence of the realm was, primarily, the responsibility of the amirdom's own army, with the Amir as its commander-in-chief. This army was composed of several thousand soldiers divided into three: the infantry, the cavalry and the artillery. Each of these three forces was commanded by a *sartip* (brigadier) or a *sarhang* (colonel) who would normally be selected from among trained members of the family. The forces stationed in Sistan were commanded by a *sartip* or *sarhang* from the family to signify the strategic

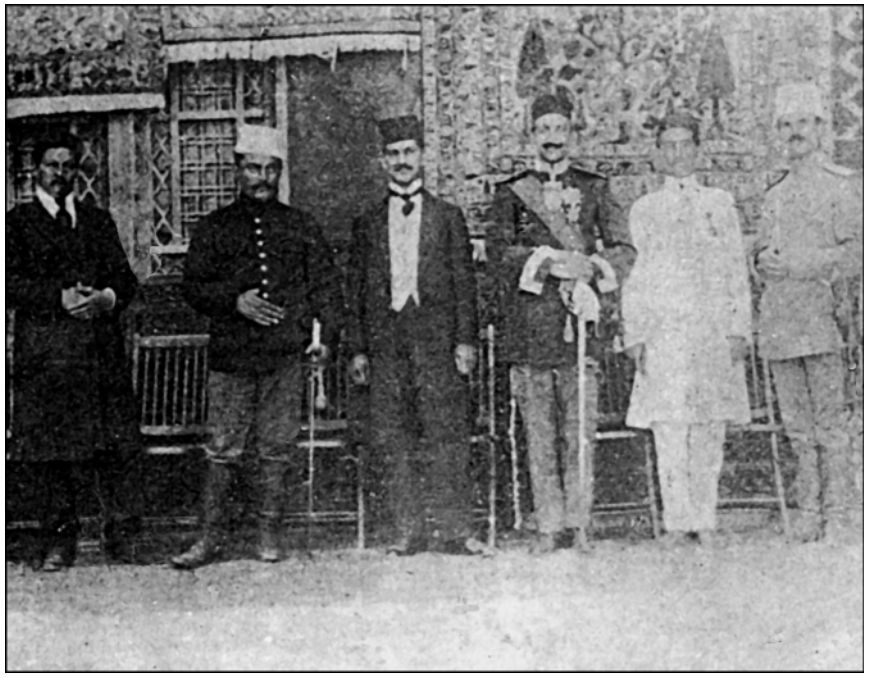


Plate 2.1 The Amir of Qaen and the staff of the amirdom. From right: Ali-Naghi Vaziri, commander of the cavalry; E'tesam al-Molk, kargozar; Amir of Qaen, Amir Shokat al-Molk II; Baqa ad-Doleh Vakili; Pishkar-e Daraei; Motazedi, military investigator; Dr Mahmud Kasravi, head of the clinic.

importance of the province for the amirdom. Another officer, separately accountable to the Amir, was *bazras-e qoshun* (inspector general) of the armed forces, who also was a member of the political administration of the amirdom.

The infantry consisted of the *sarbaz* or foot soldiers, and *ilyatis* or irregular tribesmen. The *sarbaz* and artillerymen were mostly recruited from among the Azerbaijanis who have always enjoyed the reputation of being very loyal and fine warriors. Scores of gunners hailed from Tabriz and held a better position in the army of Khozeimeh amirdom.[42] The soldiers were armed with various types of rifles in the post-Nader Shah era, i.e. Wendell, Jezail,[43] and Misquotes.[44] Artillerymen were armed with cannons of various kinds. The cavalry, a mounted force, used both camels and horses, and the entire force of the Qaenat amirdom accounted for one *fowj* (an old Iranian division) at the time of Qajar kings.[45]

This army fluctuated in size and number according to the fluctuating size of the amirdom at various periods, and was divided into three to five

regiments. Of these regiments, two were garrisoned at Nosratabad after the annexation of Sistan to the amirdom. One of these two regiments was disbanded towards the end of the nineteenth century, while 'the other supplied the shopkeepers for the capital (of Sistan) in the intervals of their military duties'.[46]

The *sarbazes* were paid, towards the end of the nineteenth century, seven *tumans* or about £1.8s in cash, and three Qaeni *kharvars* (about 1095 lb) of grain per annum.[47] Compared with their counterparts in the infantry, the artillerymen were of a superior standard in terms of both equipment and efficiency. They were also better paid.[48] Their commissioned officers, like those in the infantry, were trained in Tehran. Almost all European travellers who visited Qaen and Sistan in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century spoke of the poor condition and poor organization of the army of the amirdom. This was true not only of that army but also of the military forces of the entire country. Yet, this poorly maintained army of Qaen was able to defend the amirdom, and the eastern frontiers of Iran for that matter, against numerous raids and encroachments from the east.

The amirdom paid no regular tax to the central government until the second half of the nineteenth century. The revenues were spent on maintaining the amirdom's frontier-keeping forces and other administrators and officials in the district.[49] Birjand, the capital city of the amirdom in the nineteenth century traded mainly with Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf, and with Sabzevar and Mashhad in Khorasan.

The Khozeimeh amirs of recent centuries

Amir Esmail Khan

In the absence of any reliable record of the Khozeimeh Amirs of Qaen in the pre-Safavid history, Amir Esmail Khan is, inevitably considered in this work as the founder of the new line of Khozeimeh dynasty.

Unlike some members of his family, accused of having supported Mahmud and Ashraf Abdali in their raids and occupation of Capital Isfahan and other Iranian cities, historical evidence suggest that Amir Esmail Khan accompanied the Safavid pretender Tahmasp III to Khorasan were he joined Nader Shah (1688–1747) in his campaign against the Abdali amirs. While in Khorasan, the Safavid pretender entrusted the official title of governor of Qaenat, Farah, Tun and Tabas, and Kohkiluyeh on to the Amir. This title was reaffirmed by Nader Shah (then Nader Qoli) on the eve of war with the Ottomans (21st–25th March 1731). The manuscript *Jahangoshay-e Naderi* describing the events of 1731 (1144 AH) explains: 'It was during these few days of Norouz . . . that the Imperial decree was issued for marching toward Iraq . . . Ayalat-e Farah and governorship of Qaen were given to Esmail Khan Khozeimeh'.[50]

The same source commenting on the events of the year 1732 (1145 AH) records:

> At the time when the Iranian forces had the city of Baghdad under their siege and as Nader Shah was moving towards Kirkuk and Mussel ... the news that Mohammad Khan Baluchi had overwhelmed some regions of Fars, was communicated to him. As the task of prolonging the siege did not require a large number of troops to be kept stationed around Baghdad, he decided to return Esmail Khan to his amirdom at Qaen by honouring him with the governorship of Ayalat-e Kohkiluyeh.[51]

Meanwhile, Amir Esmail Khan was assigned to fight Mohammad Khan Baluchi who had taken some parts of Fars (the districts of Kohkiluyeh). His forces, together with the forces commanded by other amirs, entered Fars. After Nader Shah's return from conquering Iraq, Tahmasp Qoli Khan of Isfahan was assigned to join the Khozeimeh Amir in defeating the Baluchi Khan in Kohkiluyeh. Together they toppled Mohammad Khan Baluchi who moved out of Shiraz in 1732.[52]

Amir Alam Khan I 'Vakil ad-Doleh'

Amir Alam Khan, son of Amir Esmail Khan, joined Nader Shah's army as a young man in 1736. Very soon he earned reputation as a brave and wise warrior. He is so mentioned in the *Jahangoshay-e Naderi* and *Mojmal at-Tavarikh-e Golestaneh*, historical records of the time. He fought at the head of the Khozeimeh army alongside Nader Shah in the latter's many campaigns in the east and west of Iran. It was because of his bravery that he became one of Nader Shah's few elite officers. *Jahangoshay-e Naderi* indicates that when Nader put his military camp at Morad Tappeh near Iravan (Yaravan), to prepare for a battle against the Ottomans in 1738 (1151 AH), the Ottomans appeared before him with a hundred thousand mounted cavalries and an infantry of 40 thousand. The same source adds that after the Ottomans were defeated, Nader Shah returned to Khorasan and:

> ... assigned Mohammad-Ali Khan Qaraqoyunlu as the commander-in-chief, aided by Haji Seif ad-Din Bayat with a portion of the victorious army, and Amir Alam Khan, at the head of the Khozeimeh Arabs and Lolaei and Nakhaei forces of altogether twenty thousand of the victorious troops, to hold Iraq.[53]

The Qaraqoyunlu Khan, joined by a number of other khans and chiefs, according to this source, decided to revolt against Nader Shah and as he was unaware of Amir Alam Khan's loyalty to his king, discussed the idea with

him. The Amir refused his propositions, and conflict broke out between the two in the vicinity of Fili. Although the Qaraqoyunlu Khan's forces were about four thousand strong, Amir Alam Khan fought him in one whole day from morning to the evening with the two thousand men in his command, and defeated him. The Qaragoyunlu Khan was blinded and his accomplice, Emam Qoli Khan Abivardi was killed. Of the fortunes of the blinded Khan one thousand *tumans* went to Amir Alam Khan and the remaining five thousand *tumans* was distributed among his soldiers as their reward. Amir Alam Khan was also the recipient of Nader Shah's special reward.[54]

After Nader Shah's assassination in Jamadi al-Akhar 1161 AD (AD 19th June 1747) his grandson Shahrokh Mirza was put on the throne by some of Nader Shah's army commanders. Soon a Seyyed Mohammad, a Safavid descendent, revolted against Shahrokh with the help of Amir Alam Khan I Khozeimeh. As a devote Shi'ite Moslem, he proved in practice that he was still loyal to the Shi'ite Safavid dynasty, after having worked and fought besides his Sunni sovereign, Nader Shah Afshar all those years. With this move, Amir Alam Khan proved that in his way of thinking there was no room in the task of achieving Iranian sovereignty for the Afshar 'usurpers', except for Nader Shah himself, to whom the Amir was a loyal general and a trusted noble.

Seyyed Mohammad blinded Shahrokh Mirza and declared himself in Mashhad as 'Shah Soleyman the Safavid' ascending the Iranian throne. A nephew of the last Safavid Shah (Shah Sultan Hussein), and his son-in-law, Shah Soleyman, immediately embarked, with the help of Amir Alam Khan,[55] on the task of unifying the country. They appointed Salim Khan Afshar as commander of Iraq, Fath-Ali Khan as commander of Azerbaijan, and Mohammad-Hassan Khan Qajar as commander of Astarabad and Mazandaran.[56] At the same time, the Amir sent his brother, Amir Masum Khan, with a sizeable army to Herat, where they succeeded in capturing the city for a very short time. Other armies were sent to restore security in Qandehar and Kabul.[57] These expeditions clashed with the interests of Ahmad Khan Abdali, another general of Naderi army and a powerful contender for the leadership of Iran. He was then trying to recapture India and repeat Nader Shah's famous Indian campaign. Shah Soleyman, however, was not to reign for long. He was soon overpowered by Yusef-Ali Khan Jalayer, Shahrokh Mirza's general. *Mojamal at-Tavarikh Golestaneh* records that all these activities were taking place owing to the personality, power, wisdom, and political acumen of Amir Alam Khan Khozeimeh Vakil ad-Doleh. 'It is unfortunate for the people of Iran', says Ayati, a Khorasani collector of historical records, 'whose first day of misfortune must be counted from when Amir Alam Khan's efforts were wasted because of the betrayal committed by Yusef-Ali Khan Jalayer, prompted by the women of Shahrokhi harem'.[58]

Shortly, on the day when Amir Mehrab Khan, a close associate of Amir Alam Khan, died, the nobles whose forces usually monitored activities at the strategic point of Chahar Bagh in Mashhad (city centre) were mourning him

and reciting from the Qor'ān. It was during that momentary lack of vigilance that Yusef-Ali Khan entered the Chahar Bagh, on the orders of Shahrokh Mirza's wife, Habibeh Soltan Begom, with a group of armed men. They captured Shah Soleyman and blinded him, sounding the trumpet in the name of Shahrokh Mirza.[59] Amir Alam Khan, who would not even think of such a treachery, attacked the Chahar Bagh supported by other commanders. Yusef-Ali Khan opened the cannon fire on them and killed scores of the Seyyed's supporters. The news of Seyyed's loss of sight disappointed the people, according to the historical records of the time. Amir Alam Khan and other nobles went to their own realms.

Having restored the blind Afsharid Shah to the throne, Yusef-Ali Khan took the money and some of the crown jewels at Shahrokh Mirza's disposal and left for Kalat (Naderi) to feast and drink. These events, and the fact that a weak and blind Shah was left in Mashhad on his own, saw the power and influence of the state at its lowest ebb. On the other hand, Ahmad Khan Abdali (later Ahmad Shah Dorrani) arrived in Khorasan with his army. In Herat Behbood Khan and Amir Masum Khan surrendered to him.[60]

Yusef-Ali Khan's unexpected action, however, angered Amir Alam Khan, who decided to take the whole of the country. Ahmad Khan Abdali had returned to Kabul and Amir Alam Khan advanced troops to the Kalat-e Naderi, captured Yusef Ali Khan Jalayer and his brother. He subsequently marched on Mashhad, dethroned Shahrokh for the second time and declared himself 'lord sovereign' in 1748, only a year after Nader Shah's assassination.[61] Hence the Khozeimeh amir successfully completed the first round of his battles for becoming the Shah and establishing the Khozeimeh line of monarchy in Iran. Quoting a number of rare historical records of the time, Ayati's *Baharestan*, itself a rare book, records that after eradicating Yusef-Ali Khan's revolt, Amir Alam Khan:

> . . . hoisted the flag of independence and gathered around himself large groups of the Khozeimeh, Nakhaei, Lolaei, and other clans of Khorasan. He ordered a few leaders of Duli Khan Shadlu [a Kurdish Chief in Khorasan], to follow him. Wherever there was a notable chief in Khorasan accepted the authority of the Amir of 'astronomic troops' willingly or otherwise. Amir Alam Khan killed or injured many of the leading insubordinate and moved troops to capture Nishabur.[62]

Amir Alam Khan seems to have been unfortunate in the sense that his path was to be crossed by Ahmad Khan Abdali. His capture of Mashhad, Baluchistan and Herat brought him in direct confrontation with his worthy and more powerful adversary, Ahmad Khan Abdali, who succeeded in establishing the first Afghan monarchy.

From Mashhad he advanced troops to open the city of Nishabur, where the Bayat clan refused to accept his sovereignty. Near Nishabur, Amir Alam

Khan sent messages to the Bayats inviting them to surrender in peace and to accept his authority. He besieged the city when his invitation was turned down, and was about to capture the city when news of Ahmad Khan Abdali's arrival in Jam and Lankaran reached him. Amir Alam Khan left Nishabur to appear before Ahmad Khan. *Mojmal at-Tavarikh Golestaneh* records that:

> . . . he had no alternative but to abandon the siege of Nishabur and to prepare for war with Ahmad Khan . . . the military secretaries brought him the lists of the army [35000 strong] to the Khan of mighty rank. After reviewing the list and organized a cavalry force of five thousand to ride in advance of the army and ordered the troops to move to the front on the following day. The Kurdish leaders and other tribal chiefs began dissension and decided to abandon the Amir. At down when the splendor of the Eastern sun began its manifestation . . . the Amir, unaware of the fast approaching fate, moved his flag of independence towards Jam and Lankar. He was marching in those directions when the hypocrite generals left him, each taking his own men to his own country. The Amir was left with a few groups, and since he saw his fortune turned and his fate darkened, decided to suspend punishment of the Kurds for the time being. He reached the Tun fortress, which was very strong and in his possession. He left the military baggage and his harem there with his brother Amir Masum khan in charge. Himself went to Duli Khan with the few groups he had, and began to mass another army to send to war with Ahmad Khan. The leaders of the Kurds learnt of this and sent messages to Duli Khan [a Kurdish chief himself and Amir's brother-in-law] stating; 'supporting the murderer of our people is against our tribal principles and honour. If you are concerned with our tribal honour, send the Amir to us without any excuses, otherwise be prepared for war'. Since Duli Khan had no desire for tribal discords, and since he saw supporting the Amir was beyond his capability, he sent him towards Asfzar. The Kurds, informed of this move, mounted their horses immediately. The Amir was about to enter Asfzar fortress when the Kurdish groups reached him, captured him, and sent him to Shahrokh Mirza bounded up. As Shahrokh found the culprit who had ordered his blindness in his captivity, blinded him and gave him to Jafar Khan the Kurd whom did the Amir also blind. Jafar Khan took his own revenge by having the Amir flogged.[63]

Other historical sources, however, record Amir Alam Khan's faith somewhat differently. These sources speak of Amir Alam Khan's direct involvement in the war with Ahmad Khan Abdali on the arrival of the latter in Jam and Lankar, where the Amir of Qaen fought the Afghan leader forcing him to

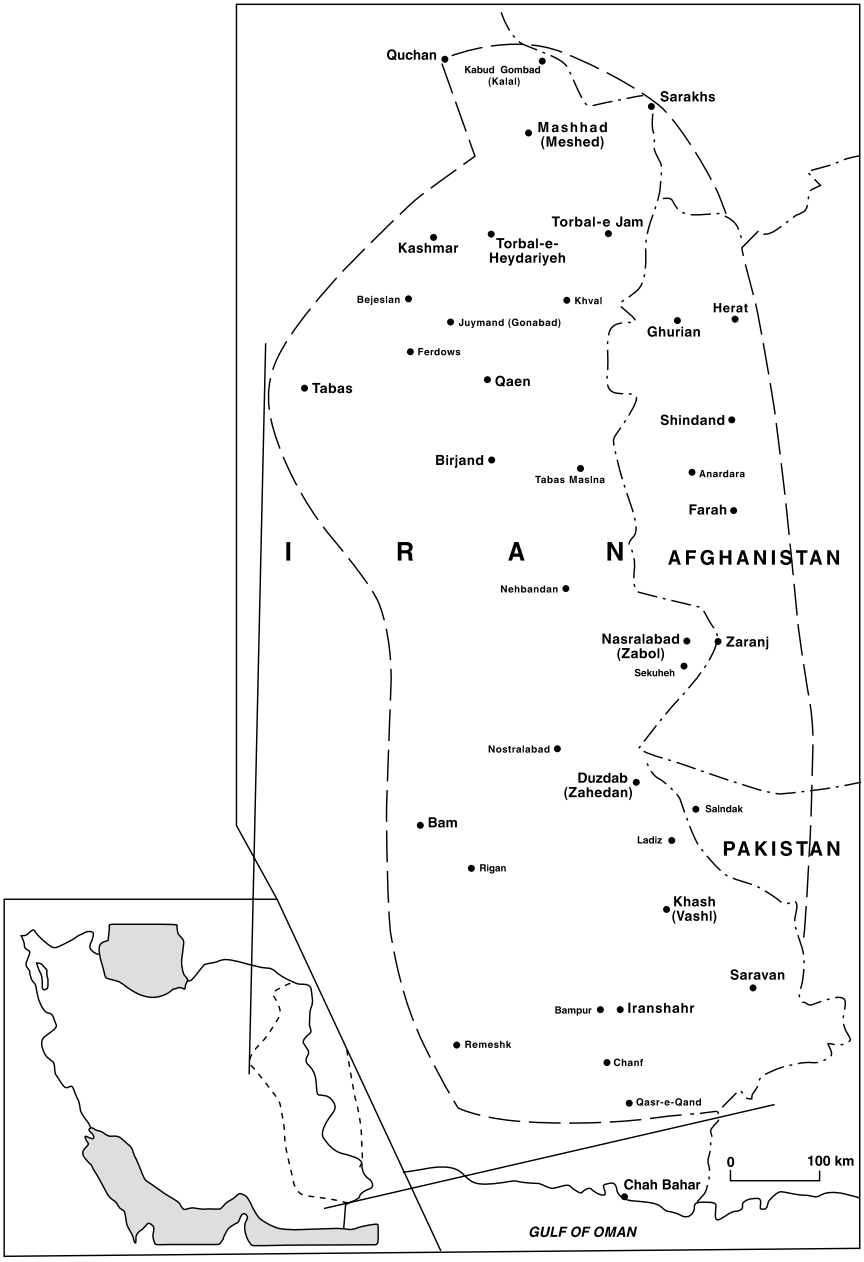
retreat in the first round of engagement. The author of *Ahmad Shah Dorrani*, using various sources gives the following account of the event:

> Mir Alam Khan was at this time the master of Mashhad, and he was preparing to besiege Nishabur when he heard of the fall of Herat into the hands of Ahmad Shah and of his march against Mashhad. He suspended his activities at Nishabur and hurried down to Mashhad to meet the advancing Afghans. He prepared the fortifications, provisioned the place, and, after having confided the defence to the inhabitants, whom he believed he could trust, he marched out of Mashhad, determined to pounce upon Herat, if possible.
>
> Ahmad Shah detailed an advance army of five thousand selected Afghans under the command of Jahan Khan Popalzei, assisted by Mir Naseer Khan, chief of Kalat, in Baluchistan, to march against Mashhad. On arrival at Turbat-i-Shaikh Jam, Jahan Khan sprang a surprise upon Mir Alam Khan by attacking him. Recovering from the first shock, Mir Alam hit back with great intrepidity and pushed back the Dorranis. But the position was soon retrieved by a bold attack of Naseer Khan of Kalat. Who charged the Persians with his three thousand horses and drove them away. Mir Alam was killed in the battle and his army was cut to pieces.[64]

Whereas Ferrier asserts that Amir Alam Khan immediately gave up the idea of keeping Mashhad and retired in the direction of Qaenat to his tribe,[65] Sir Percy Sykes records the previously quoted story adding:

> Mir Alam, recovering from the surprise, fought bravely, but was defeated and his army was cut to pieces by a charge of 3000 Baluch cavalry under Nasir Khan of Kalat. Ahmad Shah then besieged Meshed, without much success, but finally, upon receipt of large sum of money, he replaced Shah Rukh on the throne under his sovereignty.[66]

Whichever of these stories is more precise, the family tradition favours the first account. In a *farman* (decree) signed by Ahmad Shah Dorrani and dated 16th Shavval 1167 (1753), Amir Alam Khan I is compared with Nader Shah Afshar in ferocity.[67] The Amir is reported in this *farman* as being under siege in Sabzevar. Other sources recorded the year of his death as 1749. Amir Alam Khan undoubtedly was a significantly effective leader of the time and the greatest Amir of the Khozeimeh amirdom whose dominion expanded to include a very vast country. His amirdom included Qaenat (ancient Qohestan), Sistan, Baluchistan, Khorasan, Herat and Farah. He put his amirdom's southwestern outpost in Kerman. He had his capital moved from Birjand to Mashhad, which was then the capital of Iran. Had he not clashed



Map 2.1 The Khozeimeh amirdom at its peak (1747–1753).

with Ahmad Khan Abdali so soon, he would, most probably have influenced Iran's political history for a long period. From among his rivals Ahmad Khan Abdali (Ahmad Shah Dorrani) founded the first kingdom of Afghanistan; Mohammad Hassan Khan Qajar strengthened his own position in Mazandaran and Astarabad (Gorgan), enabling his son and successor, Agha Mohammad Khan, to establish the Qajar dynasty in Iran; and Karim Khan Zand founded the Zand dynasty in southern half of Iran.

Amir Masum Khan

Amir Masum Khan, was the son of Amir Esmail Khan and brother of Amir Alam Khan I. In spite of never having ruled as a Khozeimeh Amir, Masum Khan played an effective role, under his brother, in advancing the fortune of the amirdom. Most of his time was spent with Amir Alam Khan during the latter's contest for the Iranian monarchy, acting as his general and commander of the army in whom Amir Alam Khan had full trust. Having put an end to Amir Alam Khan's career, the Abdali Khan put the fortress at Tun under siege,[68] and demanded Amir Masum Khan's surrender. Unaware of his brother's fate, Amir Masum khan strengthened his fortification with the help of the small garrison he had under his command, hoping that his brother would send him reinforcements. The fort could not hold out for long, and although Amir Masum Khan resisted for some time he lost all hope when news of his brother's death reached him. He sued for peace and Ahmad Khan Abdali invited him to his presence, whereupon Amir Masum Khan presented to the Abdali khan the keys to the fort and surrendered himself.[69] He was spared and invited to continue as Amir of Qaen, which he refused. Consequently, Amir Alam Khan's son was nominated for the position.

Ahmad Khan Abdali, in this connection, followed the example of Nader Shah's policy, i.e. reinstating the defeated leaders and demanding maximum loyalty from them in their restored position.

Suffering from grief at his brother's death and the deaths of several members of his family, Amir Masum Khan was apparently unable to continue in Khorasan. He left for Tehran, where he spent the rest of his life. While in Tehran, he endowed a piece of land to the Masumiyeh School of Theology at Birjand. The deeds of this endowment were recorded in Tehran by the clerics of the capital.[70]

Amir Ali Khan

Amir Ali Khan, son of Amir Alam Khan, restored the amirdom of Khozeimeh in Qaenat after his father was killed and his uncle, Amir Masum Khan left the district for Tehran. His official title of the Amir of Qaenat was confirmed by the Zand dynasty. Amir Ali Khan was a well-known noble of Khorasan at the time, according to Sir John Malcolm. In the event of the

contest between Zand and Qajar dynasties for the monarchy of Iran, Amir Ali Khan fought on the side of Lotf-Ali Khan Zand against the Qajar Khan.

According to *Tarikh-e Guiti-gosha*,[71] when Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar defeated Lotf-Ali Khan in 1208 AH (1793) and chased him out of Kerman, Amir Ali Khan Khozeimeh gave the Khan of Zand refuge in Qaen and prepared an army for him of Qaeni and Sistani cavaliers. It was with the help of this army that the Khan of Zand entered the second round of battles with Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar in Kerman. Sir John Malcolm says of this: 'Their [Khozeimeh amirdom's] present chief Amir Ali Khan had aided Lotf Ali Khan; but the nature and situation of this country left him little to fear from Agha Mahomed, whose wisdom, he knew, would at all times prefer his proffered allegiance, to the hazard.[72]

Amir Ali Khan's rule extended from Qaen, the traditional heartland of Khozeimeh amirdom, to Sistan.

Amir Alam Khan II

Amir Alam Khan II, son of Amir Ali Khan, was named after his grandfather Amir Alam Khan I, whose memory was to be cherished by the family for ever. He succeeded his father in Qaen, and before that, he joined Lotf-Ali Khan Zand's campaign in Kerman as a commander of the Zand army. His amirdom coincided with the rule of Fath-Ali Shah Qajar in Iran, who restored the official title of the amirdom of the Khozeimeh family of Qaenat in the person of Amir Alam Khan. In 1798 (1213 AH), when Mahmud Mirza Afghan sought refuge in Iran, he was hosted by this Amir in Kashan.

Probably with Iran's repossession of Herat in mind, Fath-Ali Shah Qajar extended the Afghan prince some support and, according to the *Baharestan*,[73] the Shah instructed Amir Hassan Khan Sheibani, governor of Tabas, and Amir Alam Khan Khozeimeh to support Mahmud Mirza and to accompany him as far as Kabul itself.

Amir Alam Khan II was apparently highly respected Amir in Qaenat and the surrounding districts for the peace and tranquility that he brought to the region. He erected buildings and a fine fort in Birjand. In 1790 (1205 AH) Akhund Molla Abdul-Karim Eshraq, a highly respected cleric of the time and a disciple of Agha Mohammad Bid-Abadi Esfahani, composed some poems in praise of this fortress and its builder in which the fortress in Birjand was comparable to the monuments at Isfahan.

Amir Asadollah Khan 'Hesam ad-Doleh I'

Amir Asdaollah Khan, son of Amir Alam Khan II, succeeded his father in Qaen, Tun and Tabas. He was apparently renowned for his bravery, and joined Abbas Mirza Qajar (Nayeb as-Saltaneh) the Crown Prince in his

Khorasan campaign of 1831 (1247 AH). It appears that Prince Abbas Mirza had high regard for this Amir. When Abdor-Reza Yazdi, governor of Bafgh defied Prince Abbas Mirza and escaped from Bafgh, seeking refuge in Tabas, Amir Asadollah Khan used his good offices with the Crown Prince and secured his forgiveness for the fugitive.[74] Similarly, it is recorded that Amir Asadollah Khan Khozeimeh and Amir Ali-Naghi Khan Arab commanded parts of the military machine of the Crown Prince when the latter advanced troops towards Herat in 1833 (1249 AH). In a report on the strategic arrangement to his father, Fath-Ali Shah, Crown Prince Abbas Mirza states that he had put the task of some of the entrenchment in the 'charge of their excellencies Amir Asadollah Khan Khozeimeh, Amir of Qaen, and Mirza Hussein Khan Darudi, Chief of Nishabur'.[75]

It was during this movement of the Iranian forces towards Herat that the Crown Prince died and his son, Mohammad Mirza (later Mohammad Shah Qajar) returned the forces to Mashhad. Having left most of the responsibilities in the region with Amir Asadollah Khan Khozeimeh, Crown Prince Mohammad Mirza returned to Tehran. In 1837/8 (1253/4 AH) when Prime Minister Haj Mirza Aghasi put Herat under siege, Amir Asadollah Khan was present once again, fighting as a commander in the Iranian army. Herat was about to fall when the British intervened and Iranian troops returned, as will be discussed in Chapter 4. Amir Asadollah Khan also returned to his amirdom of Qaenat, Tun and Tabas.

When in 1852 (1269 AH) Sardar Ali Khan Sistani revolted against the central government, Amir Asadollah Khan dispatched a force commanded by his son, Mir Alam (later Amir Alam Khan III) to join Hassan Khan Jalilvand who was assigned by Prince Hesam as-Saltaneh, Prince Governor of Khorasan, to enforce the authority of the central government in Sistan. Together they hoisted the national flag at the entrance of the fort of Sekuheh, arrested the Sardar and put an end to his mutiny.[76] Less than eight years later Qaenat was raided by Turkmans. The Khozeimeh Amir succeeded in 1860 (1277 AH) in overpowering the raiders and drive them back to Afghan territories. For his bravery Amir Asadollah Khan was praised by the Shah, and his son Mir Alam was conferred to the rank of *sarhang* (colonel) for his role in those hardships.[77]

Amir Asadollah Khan also participated in the siege and capture of Quchan and its unruly khan, Reza Qoli, but before he was embarrassed by Salar's revolt in Khorasan which proved to be an arduous experience for himself and for his family. Quoting a number of original historical manuscripts of the time, *Baharestan* gives the following account of that event: 'Mohammad Hassan Khan Salar, son of Allah-Yar Khan Asef ad-Doleh Vali [Governor] of Khorasan in 1835 [1251 AH] succeeded his father as Governor of Khorasan in 1845 [1262 ah] and revolted against Central government.' The event is summed up in the said document in connection with the Khozeimeh amirdom of Qaenat in the following words:

> But as the *velayat* [district] of Qaen is concerned, after establishing his domination of Khorasan the Salar moved troops towards Qaen. Amir Asadollah Khan embarked upon defending his amirdom, but as he saw the soldiers no longer could resist the Asefi troops . . . the Amir escaped to Herat. His son, Alam Khan, was captured and the family was put under the care of the late Akhund Mulla Hussein Sar-Chahi the Friday Imam of Birjand. Alam Khan was imprisoned at Mashhad for a while, but eventually escaped and joined his father in Herat. They remained there until Prince Morad Mirza [the Shah's uncle], restored peace in Mashhad. All these times Mohammad-Ali Khan Asef ad-Doleh, son of the Salar, retained the governorship of Qaenat. He applied a cruel policy there.

Of the many amazing details of this event, one is that, according to the said document, Akhund Mulla Hussein Sar-Chahi was a learned cleric, an eloquent poet and a sincere friend of Amir Asadollah Khan, who:

> . . . continued praising the Amir and damning his foes during his sermons. Asef ordered him to be punished for opposing the Salar regime and inciting disturbances. To punish the cleric, he was ordered to be tied up at the end of the cannon and the gunner was ordered to fire. The gunner tried a few times to fire the gun, but it failed. He lost his temper, threw his hat on the ground, tore his shirt, and said: 'don't you see the cannon does not affect the servant of Imam Hussein.' He then shouted: 'I adore you Ya Aba-Abdollah (O father of Abdollah)'[78] and thus, brought the whole episode to an end.[79]

Apparently during their stay in Herat Amir Asadollah Khan and his son Mir Alam acquired many lands which mattered tremendously in extending Khozeimeh amirdom's influence in Afghanistan by way of extending the family's land-holding state as far as Herat itself. Amir Asadollah Khan Hesam ad-Doleh I died in 1845.

Amir Alam Khan III 'Heshmat al-Molk'

Another highly notable Amir of the Khozeimeh dynasty was Amir Alam Khan III, son of Amir Asadollah Khan, who succeeded his father and expanded the influence of the amirdom. His dominion was almost an exact replica of that of Amir Alam Khan I, short of its Herat and Mashhad dependencies. He uprooted minor chiefs ruling in the district, such as the chiefs of Nakhaei, Khusf, Neh and the Sunni–Khaneh plain. He soon restored the Khozeimeh amirdom in the entire region of Qaenat and its traditional dependencies. He received a *farman* (decree) from Mohammad

Shah Qajar in 1847 (Safar 1264) stating that he was 'recognized as frontier-keeping Amir of Qaen'.[80] Members of the family state that unfortunately this document is displaced and its present whereabouts is unknown.

In 1865 Amir Alam Khan advanced troops to Sistan where some Afghan and Baluch chiefs had defied Iran's authority. He built a strong fortress in Nosrat-Abad (modern Zabol) but was besieged by his adversaries in that fort during the battles. The siege lasted for about six months during which his son, Ali-Akbar Khan, failed to send reinforcements. He eventually succeeded in breaking free from the siege and defeating the unruly chiefs with the help of reinforcements sent from Mashhad, and the victory resulted in the re-annexation of that province to the Khozeimeh amirdom.

Moreover, in a politically motivated move to seal an alliance with the Baluchi chiefs, he himself married the daughter of Sardar Ebrahim Khan Baluch.[81] Similarly, he married his elder son, Ali-Akbar Khan, to the daughter of Sardar Sharif Khan Naruei, and his second son, Mohammad Esmail Khan, to the daughter of Sardar Ahmad Khan Baluch (later Sardar Ahmad Shah, ruler of Herat).[82] This political move worked effectively in favour of Iran later during the boundary arbitration between Iran and Afghanistan, when the Baluchi chiefs testified that their dominions belonged to Iran. Amir Alam Khan's victory in Sistan included the capture of fort Nad-e Ali on the eastern side of the Hirmand River, now belonging to Afghanistan. A chronicle of the time reported this event as follows:

> Thursday 19th Jamadi al-Avval – at this time another carrier arrived from Mostofi-al-Mamalek delivering reports from Mohammad Esmail Khan Vakil al-Molk, Governor of Kerman, and Mir Alam Khan, Amir of Qaen and Sistan. The report from Sistan indicated that resultant from the good fortune of the Shahansha, Fort Nad-e Ali, situated on the other side of the Hirmand River, and a strong fort indeed, was captured from Ebrahim Khan Baluch [Pordeli] after four hours of siege and battle.[83]

Much delighted by this news, the Shah dispatched, as a token of his appreciation, an ornamented sword to Amir Alam Khan together with official governorship of Sistan and the titles 'Heshmat al-Molk' and 'Amir Tuman'. Presentation of this sword is confirmed by General Goldsmid who states: 'but we hear that a sword of honour is on its way to Sistan as a present to the Amir from the Shah'.[84] Subsequently, when in Mashhad, Nasr ad-Din Shah Qajar received Amir Alam Khan to give him his personal words of gratitude and encouragement.

The Amir is described in General Goldsmid's book *Eastern Persia*, as:

> . . . a tall fine-looking man, with a countenance principally noticeable for the immense size of the jaw bones, which project from his face

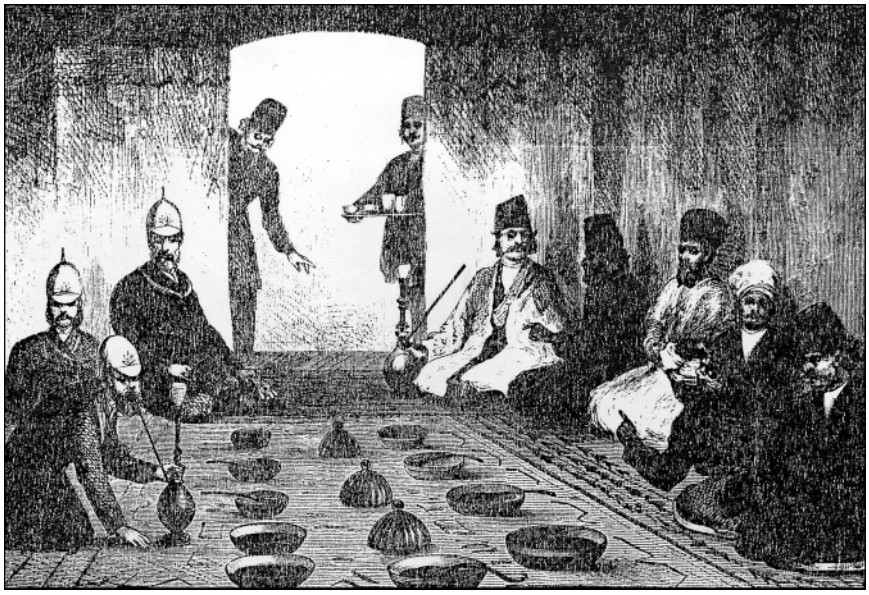


Plate 2.2 Major General Goldsmid and his staff of the British frontier arbitration at breakfast with Amir Alam Khan of Qaen and Sistan.

Source: Goldsmid, Major Genreal F., *Eastern Persia*, vol. II, London 1876, Frontispiece.

> like fins. He wears a thick moustache, is not unlike the Shah, and his expression – though somewhat stern and cruel, with a want of frankness in it – can at times be made very courteous and engaging.[85]

Of Amir Alam Khan's fort at Nosrat Abad General Goldsmid says: 'The new fort or town of Nasirabad, simply called 'shahr', or town, by the natives of the province, is built in the shape of quadrangle, with very strong and high mud walls, having towers at regular intervals.'[86]

The new town was entirely populated by Qaeni settlers, whereas the old town was inhabited by the Sistanis. Naser-Abad was renamed 'Zabol' at the time of Reza Shah Pahlavi, commemorating an ancient location in Sistan. The irrigation system was improved under Amir Alam Khan III. New *qanats* and *abanbars* (water reservoirs) were built in every settlement of the province, and as Goldsmid puts it:

> . . . he intended to make it the garden of Persia. Men had been sent for in Tehran to instruct the inhabitants in the cultivation of the potato, orange, date-palm, tobacco, and other plants – as he was of opinion that the soil of Sistan would produce every fruit or vegetable known to man.[87]

By fighting off separatist elements and developing and populating Sistan, this Amir was successful in preventing the province from going to the Afghans during the boundary arbitration of 1870s. Impressed by Amir Alam Khan's work in this respect, the British arbitration team of 1872 remarked:

> . . . we learnt how completely successful had been the able measures taken by the Amir of Kain to thoroughly Persianise the whole of the province on the west bank of river [Hirmand]; how thoroughly the old Baluch chiefs in the vicinity, with the exception of Chukhansur and Lash Juwain, were inclined to play into his hands, and how contented with the present state of affairs, or at least insouciant of change, were the general inhabitants.[88]

Apart from building and developing, Amir Alam Khan III was successful in restoring peace and stability throughout the amirdom. Travelling through the amirdom in 1872, the British boundary arbitration commission noted: 'from the peasants who accompanied the camp, we learnt that in olden times this road [from Sistan to Birjand] was most unsafe, but since the advent of the Amir of Kain highway robberies had ceased'.[89]

Amir Alam Khan is specially noted for his appreciation of politics of the time. Apparently he had detested the advent of Shir-Ali Khan in Afghanistan with his designs on Sistan. Amir Shir-Ali was in close contact with British India and, among other things, wanted from them guarantees for his young son as his heir apparent against his older son, Yaqub Khan. Amir Alam Khan III made sure that he befriended and supported the latter against the will of the Afghan Amir and the Indian government. General Goldsmid confirms in his account of events in the district that the Amir had in the previous year entertained Yaqub Khan in his amirdom for two months.[90]

On the issue of boundary arbitration, Amir Alam Khan was suspicious of the work of the British arbitration commission, thoroughly convinced that the arbitration was only to legalize ceding of significant parts of Sistan and Baluchistan to Afghanistan and India.[91] General Goldsmid states that in his first meeting with him, the Amir expressed himself very suspicious as to the proceedings of the mission, and especially Colonel Pollock's presence with the Afghan commissioner, which he seemed to think intimated an unfavourable forgone conclusion on the part of the British government.[92] The Amir seems to have been so convinced of this that he actually ignored documents signed by the Shah agreeing to boundary settlement by the arbitration mission and followed his own initiatives. Complaining of the Amir's conduct, head of the arbitration mission, General Goldsmid remarked:

> . . . on arrival at Nasirabad, the headquarter of Persian Sistan, the opposition was strengthened and, as it were organised by the

> accession of the Amir of Kain . . . the letter of diplomatic agreement acknowledged by the Shah and his Ministers was virtually considered waste paper.[93]

Amir Alam Khan was not alone in his suspicions about the boundary arbitration. Mirza Masum Khan, the Iranian commissioner, was also highly suspicious of the arbitration's intentions. His unfriendly behaviour towards the arbitration team worsened to the extent that it was no longer tolerable for the British commission. Whereas Mirza Masum Khan similarly complains to the Iranian Foreign Ministry of the behaviour of the arbitration team,[94] Sir Percy Sykes asserts that the Mirza was 'anxious to make money'.[95]

Amir Alam Khan was also noted for his respect for the religion. He was in constant contact with the *olama* (clerics),[96] and upheld religious traditions. General Goldsmid records:

> . . . while we were at Birjand a great distribution of alms took place in the town on account of the close of Muharram, during which time the Amir had at his own expense no less than seventy Tazias, or representations of the death of [Imam] Ali,[97] &c., &c., continually exhibited in various parts of the province.[98]

Amir Alam Khan's defence of the realm, development of the towns and villages, improvement of economy, maintenance of security and his respect for religion had apparently made him a popular Amir both with central government and with the general public. The British boundary arbitration team, who did not have a particularly pleasant time in the amirdom, noted his popularity by confessing: 'wherever we have been, we have noticed that he seems generally popular, and the flourishing conditions of the villages bears testimony to the security the inhabitants feel under his Government'.[99]

A devoted Shi'ite Moslem, Amir Alam Khan III built a number of *tekiyehs* (places of mourning) for the martyred Imam Hussein, which he supported financially with endowments.

He made some verses in praise of the Imam and took pilgrimage to holy shrines. Returning from one of these pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Imam Reza at Mashhad, Amir Alam Khan died in Gonabad in 1891 (1270 AH) at the age of 64.

This Amir had five children: one daughter and four sons and all four ruled over all or parts of the amirdom after his death, whereas his mother was no less a good governor than the rest of the family. Whenever the Amir was away from Birjand, his mother, not his sons, would rule the amirdom in his place. General Goldsmid describes the old lady as an obstinate governor, saying that 'it was principally to her obstinacy that we owed so much difficulty in obtaining camels'.[100]

Plate 2.3 This photograph is attributed to Amir Alam Khan III, Mir Tuman, Heshmat al-Molk I, Amir of Qaen and Sistan at an advanced age.

Amir Ali-Akbar Khan 'Hesam ad-Doleh II'

When Amir Alam Khan died, his elder son, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan, was in Sistan where he continued acting as the Amir of Sistan and Tabas. His younger brother, Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I took over the amirdom in Qaenat simply because of being present in Birjand at the time of their father's demise. Amir Ali-Akbar Khan never accepted his younger brother's rule in Birjand albeit that he resided there for most of his life. This is how the amirdom was divided into two separate but interdependent amirdoms of Qaenat and of Sistan. This split remained in force until 1930s when Amir Shokat al-Molk II gave the Qaen seat of the amirdom to his nephew, Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III, son of Amir Ali-Akbar Khan.

Amir Ali-Akbar Khan is variably described as a 'brave young man whose decisive action kept the neighbouring Baluchis and Afghans at bay, thus,

safeguarding the region for years'[101] and 'singularly woodheaded youth, wanting manner and conversation, and was entirely in the hands of the Mustofi or manager of affairs, who was remarkably intelligent'.[102] Interviewed by this author, the late Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, a grandson of Amir Ali-Akbar Khan asserted:

> Wood-headed? I do not know! But he was an unsophisticated person who put too much trust in his Mostofi, Mirza Mohammad-Ali. When Amir Alam Khan III was under siege in Sistan and sent for reinforcements from Birjand, his elder son, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan wanted to send troops to help him, but under the influence of his *mostofi* who thought lack of action would result in the defeat of the father and the rule of the son in his place, decided not to do so. Reinforcements, however, were sent from Mashhad, and Amir Alam Khan defeated the enemies. Having learnt of the reasons for his son's lack of action on his return from Sistan, he was furious with the son and more so with the son's *mostofi*. The punishment was so bad that Amir Ali-Akbar Khan found it necessary to leave Qaenat, travelling around as a Darvish, or a man of no earthly desires. His *mostofi*, Mirza Mohammad-Ali, also escaped to Torbat-e Heydariyeh where he lived the rest of his life, and his descendants, known as Monsef family,[103] still live there.

Once, before the death of his younger brother, Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan sent his son, Amir Masum Khan to Birjand where his uncle received him with kindness. This kindly reception marked the good relationships between the two brothers who were reported in some historical writing as having been enemies from the beginning to the end. After a while, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan decided to send his son out of Birjand to Tabas, to substitute him and to prevent any clash of interest between him and his brother.

After Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I died, the elder brother, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan, claimed unity of the Khozeimeh amirdom. He arrived in Birjand for the fulfilment of the claim. This was the time of Mohammad-Ali Shah Qajar's turbulent rule in Iran. The Amir tried to unite the family under his own leadership, but faced the challenge of a much younger brother, Amir Shokat al-Molk II. His pro-Shah policy clashed with pro-constitutional-movement policies of the young brother. The very young Amir saw accession to the amirdom of Qaenat as his own right, mainly owing to the fact that he was like a son to his other brother, Amir Shokat al-Molk I who fathered no children and had made him his heir. A year later (1909), when Mohammad-Ali Shah was toppled, Ayatollah Sheikh Fazlollah Nouri was executed and the constitutional revolutionaries succeeded in establishing the parliament, Shokat al-Molk II used his influence with the leaders of constitutional

Plate 2.4 Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, Heshmat al-Molk II, Amir of Sistan and Tabas.

movements like Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabaei and Ayatollah Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani and regained the amirdom of Qaenat from his much older brother. Following this development, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan remained in Birjand until he died in January 1915.

Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan 'Shokat al-Molk I'

Following the death of Amir Alam Khan III in 1891, his elder son, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan inherited his title 'Heshmat al-Molk' together with the governorship of Sistan. Hence, a new title 'Shokat al-Molk' was created for his second son, Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan, who inherited the father's title 'Amir Tuman' together with the amirdom of Qaenat. Colonel Yate was of opinion that: 'by thus splitting the family up the Iranian government were able to reduce its power.[104] This assertion, though a prophecy of what was to become of the Khozeimeh amirdom about three decades later, did not reflect the realities of the time. That is to say, the splitting up of the amirdom in the wake of the demise of Amir Alam Khan III had nothing to do with the policies

Plate 2.5 Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, still a young amir at his residence in the village of Abedi near Birjand.

of the central government of Iran. It was the outcome of a dispute between his sons as to whose right was to assume the amirdom in its traditional heartland (Qaenat). The dispute was first triggered when the old Amir died in Gonabad in 1891. His second son, Amir Esmail Khan, who happened to be in Birjand at the time, arrived in Gonabad and swiftly moved the body to Mashhad, without waiting for his older brother, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan, governor of Sistan, whose arrival could take much time. Moreover, the younger brother effectively took over the amirdom of Qaenat and most of the estate and titles. He left his father's first title 'Heshmat al-Molk' to his elder brother but assumed his second title 'Amir Tuman' and created for himself a new title 'Shokat al-Molk'. Of his father's estate towards the end of the nineteenth century, Yate asserts: 'His father was said to have left 60,000 tumans (£12,000) in cash as well as a large amount of jewelry and arms and considerable land property.'[105]

Amir Esmail Khan's amirdom of Qaen was still a large country. It extended as far as Neh-Bandan to the south, and the village of Sar-Chal-e Amiri on the

edge of the great desert in Kerman to the southwest. Birjand, the capital city, was also a large town at the time. It had an estimated population of 25,000.[106]

Amir Esmail Khan's dispute with his older brother Amir Ali-Akbar Khan resulted in both brothers being summoned to appear before the Shah in 1903. Shokat al-Molk I declined to go to Tehran owing to ill health. Instead, he sent his younger brother, Mohammad Ebrahim Khan to Tehran where he received the official order of governorship of Qaen upon receiving news of Amir Esmail Khan's death in 1904.

Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I was married to the daughter of Sultan Ahmad Khan Baluch, Shah of Herat. She was the granddaughter of Amir Dust Mohammad Khan, the first ruler of Kabul who re-established the Kingdom of Afghanistan in 1863. The marriage produced no children. He was a religiously inclined Shi'ite who had built the Shokatiyeh Husseiniyeh (place of mourning Imam Hussein) of Birjand with adequate provisions from the endowments devoted to it by the Amir. This building was later turned into Birjand's famous Shokatiyeh school and high school.

Amir Heidar-Qoli Khan

Amir Alam Khan's third son was Amir Heidar-Qoli Khan who was given governorship of the small district of Neh-Bandan by his eldest brother, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan. Neh-Bandan was, at the time, in the realm of influence of Amir Esmail Khan's in-laws. He had married the granddaughter of Lotf-Ali Khan, local governor of the district. When the British boundary arbitration commission was in the region, Amir Heidar-Qoli Khan was about ten years of age, and was described by the visiting commissioners in the following words:

> At one mile and a-half from the town we were met by an *istikbal* [welcoming party] with two led horses, headed by the youngest son of the Amir, a very little fellow of some eight or nine years old, who had already made a visit to Tehran. He was an exact representation on a small scale of his father the Amir, riding a very large horse that he could barely straddle in a very plucky manner, and whenever he could bring the horse within speaking distance, was most anxious to engage in conversation.[107]

Unfortunately, not much is known of this Amir, his family or his amirdom.

Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan 'Shokat al-Molk' II

Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan was the youngest of Amir Alam Khan's four sons, with a considerable age gap between him and his elder brothers.

When the second-eldest brother, Amir Esmail Khan was summoned by the Shah to attend the imperial court or to be dismissed, he was sent to Tehran instead of the ailing Amir. He was in Tehran when his brother died and obtained the official governorship of Qaen together with the title 'Shokat al-Molk', a title with which he was associated throughout his life.

The massive wealth inherited from the former Shokat al-Molk and at the disposal of the young Amir, enabled him to rule with the generosity that he was renowned for, and brought him much fame and respect both in the amirdom and in Tehran. Hence, it is easy to understand why so many works of literature have been made in praising him. While still a young Amir, Shokat al-Molk II was described by Mr Hale, Manager of the Anglo-Persian Bank (Bank-e Shahanshahi) at Birjand, who had spent about three years in that district and published one of the most informative books on this Amir and his family amirdom, in the following letter:

> *Birjand, 23rd March 1914* [two days after the Persian Norouz] The Duke, the Amir, the great man, has arrived from the capital, with his men-at-arms and his train of followers. Which is to say that the Governor has returned from Teheran. There was a great stir and clamour at his coming, ... a provincial ruler is a powerful man in Persia. The town had a field-day for his entry, and did no work for three days, most of the chief people having ridden out thirty miles to welcome him and escort him in. X and I sent him letters of salutation with mounted representatives who joined his escort. He must have been very tired, I am afraid, though very happy, for was he not returning to the home of his fathers and the people his fathers had ruled for generations, and had he not been honoured by the Shah and given an addition to the territories under his administration? So the hand played and the horses pranced and his carriage rolled past the town and across the plain to his house a couple of miles away. There he had a great reception, with mullas uttering benedictions and poets reciting odes. On the following afternoon I called on him and drank tea and exchanged polite remarks. He is a tall, lean man of about thirty-three, with fine-cut, mobile, Arab features, a prominent nose, and a sallow complexion. His voice is soft, his speech clear and rapid. His bearing is unaffected, and his manners are full of restrained vivacity and natural courtesy and gentleness. He is evidently a man of keen perceptions, with an active mind and a marked individuality, for which the gods be praised. He was accompanied by three young officials – one of them our stout, ruddy-faced prince of the blood royal, the other two, just arrived with the Amir, being a vigorous and honest-looking officer of cavalry and a revenue collector. The last has an incipient beard, but the others, including the Amir, are clean shaven but for their moustaches,

> which a Persian never on any account shaves. The revenue collector did not seem at all pleased at the idea of living in such a hopeless little hole as Birjand, and he even said as much. The Amir, of course, showed no sign that he didn't like the remark, which somebody else countered by asking the tired one if he had not come here to have an occupation, and to be, in a sense, a guest.[108]

While Shokat al-Molk II governed Qaenat, the Sistan and Tabas dependencies of the amirdom were under the rule of his eldest brother, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, who took Qaen as well in 1907 for about two years. In 1909 Qaen was returned to Shokat al-Molk, whose rule was to be interrupted once again in 1916. This time, his nephew, Amir Masum khan Hesam ad-Doleh III, son of Amir Ali-Akbar Khan took Qaen from Shokat al-Molk for another two years.

Throughout his relatively long tenure as Amir, Qaenat benefited from his patronage, particularly in terms of development. Several development programmes were carried out for the amirdom by Shokat al-Molk II. These included the following:

1. Piping drinking water for Birjand in mid-1910s, when even Tehran lacked such facilities. He bought pipes from the British in India and piped drinking water from the hills of Aliabad.
2. Distributing among the peasants large numbers of valuable grafts of fruit trees, pistachio trees and other crops, and encouraging his son and his nephew's son to study in agriculture.
3. Establishing several schools for boys and girls, which were added later by a number of high schools. In the 1970s the Shokatiyeh educational establishments founded the Shokatiyeh University (now Birjand University) on the endowments of Shokat al-Molk's family.
4. Opening a clinic in Birjand which was the germ from which developed Qaenat's health service with a number of clinics and hospitals, including the Red Lion and Sun Society (now Red Crescent) hospital in 1925.

Like his forefathers before him, Amir Shokat al-Molk II was also a Shi'ite Moslem of whose devotion to Ashura (the anniversary of Imam Hussein's martyrdom) says Professor Bastani-Parizi, an Iranian historian: 'Amir Shokat al-Molk had recognized Ashura that in spite of being so close to the Reza Shahi set up, he went to his place of eternal peace with his dignity intact.'[109]

British sources indicate that Amir Shokat al-Molk II re-established peace and security in the amirdom, which was badly shattered hitherto by some Baluchi and Afghan tribes who had carried out raids of *chapo* or looting on Qaenat and Sistan since the death of Amir Alam Khan III. Hence, much of the time and energy of the young Amir were spent in suppressing these plunders and other upheavals. Rivalries with his nephew over which branch of the

family had the right to govern Qaen, the heartland of the amirdom, on the other hand, were heightened by the political tensions in the country at large. Whereas, Amir Shokat al-Molk sided with the constitutional movements, his nephew Hesam ad-Doleh, Amir of the Sistan dominion of the amirdom, sided with those who opposed it.[110] These differing political affiliations caused much chaos in the amirdom and in the family. Using his influence with the anti-constitutionalists in Tehran, Hesam ad-Doleh managed, in February 1916 to take governorship of Qaen from Shokat al-Molk. This change of governorship did not last long, however, and about a year later (in February 1917) Amir Shokat al-Molk managed to use his influence with the constitutionalists in Tehran and regain the official governorship of Qaenat.

Another problem of this period was the rebellion in 1921 of Colonel Mohammad-Taghi Pessian in Mashhad against the newly appointed government of Ahmad Qavam as-Saltaneh. In a telegraphic message to the Amir, the new prime minister asked him to 'consider Colonel Pessian as an outlaw', and to 'send troops to stop his insurgency'. A wise politician like Shokat al-Molk II would not declare war on the colonel; instead he chose to negotiate with him. These negotiations were about to bear fruit when the colonel was killed by his own mutinous troops in Quchan.[111]

These events coincided with sweep changes in Iran's political and economic life that began with Reza Khan (later Reza Shah Pahlavi)'s *coup d'état* of 1921. Traditionally loyal to the authority of Shahanshah of Iran, whoever that person might be, the two rival Khozeimeh Amirs realized massive changes were about to take place throughout the country. They therefore signed a treaty of friendship on twentieth Jamadi as-Sani 1339 AH (1921) whereby they undertook, 'not to act in any war against one another; to consider [their] dignity, creditworthiness, and [their] estate as common to both etc.'[112] The two amirs remained faithful to the spirit of this treaty as long as they both lived, albeit they chose slightly different surnames when the newly introduced legislation made it compulsory for all Iranians to replace their customary family title with an official surname. Amir Shokat al-Molk assumed the surname 'Alam' clearly in honour of three of his forefathers named 'Alam Khan', the last, Amir Alam Khan III, being his own father. But Amir Masum Khan Hessam ad-Doleh chose the traditional family name of 'Khozeimeh', whereas his son, Amir Hussein Khan assumed the surname 'Khozeime[113] Alam', combining the two names. Shokat al-Molk's other nephew, Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh and the rest of the family, however, settled on the traditional family title of 'Khozeimeh' as their new surname.

Following these developments, Amir Shokat al-Molk Alam decided to retire from active rule of the amirdom. He thus divided the amirdom between his two nephews: giving Qaenat, the traditional heartland of the amirdom, to Amir Masum Khan Hessam ad-Doleh III, and governorship of Sistan to Amir Mohammad-Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh. For himself, he chose to retire and live the rest of his life in peace – but peace was not to

come yet. Following Reza Shah's assumption of the monarchy of Iran (1925), Shokat al-Molk was summoned to Tehran and appointed governor of Fars or Persia (the southern province of Iran). A year later he returned to Tehran and was given the portfolio of Post, Telegraph and Telephone. Apparently he disliked both positions which, were accepted without enthusiasm, as his wish then was to live in peace in his native Birjand.[114]

After dividing the amirdom between Amir Hessam ad-Doleh and his other nephew, Amir Samsam ad-Doleh, Shokat al-Molk gave in marriage, his elder daughter, Bibi Fatemeh to Hessam ad-Doleh's son, Amir Hussein Khan, and his second daughter, Bibi Zohreh to Samsam ad-Doleh's son, Amir Esmail Khan. It has been suggested that by doing so, the Amir was trying to put the finishing touches to the unity of the family. If this was the motivation for these marriages, it certainly had the intended result. Interviewed by this author, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeimeh Alam disputed this suggestion, reiterating that his marriage to Bibi Fatemeh Alam was not arranged for political reasons. 'It was the decision of the two of us', he said. Reconciliation of the two branches of the family, however, came a bit too late as the centralized nation-state established by Reza Shah left no room for the survival of the Khozeimeh amirdom or any other local autonomies of the traditional Persian Federation.

Famous Iranian poets of the time like Iraj Mirza and Malek osh-Shoara Bahar, praised this amir, but of all those who have written about him, none has said so much in so few words, as the British diplomat, Sir Claremont Skrine, who dedicated his book *World War in Iran* to the memory of Shokat al-Molk Alam, dated winter of 1945:

> Shaukat-ul-Molk, head of the seigniorial Alam family of the Qaenat which dates back to the Middle Ages and still owns large estates in the Birjand-Qain district. I wrote about him as follows in a private letter from Birjand in October 1927, the first year we were there. One need not altogether despair about Persia so long as there are one or two men in it like the Shaukat-ul-Mulk, our Acting Governor, whose guests we have been on a partridge shooting expedition. Until I came here I did not think there existed in all Persia, from what I had heard, a genuinely patriotic, public spirited and incorruptible Persian landlord of high degree. But the Shaukat is all that, and more. You can get a glimpse of his love of his country, and of the Qaenat in particular, if you get him talking of past times. He is also a specimen of the *rara avis*, a devout and deeply religious Shi'a gentleman who is not in the least bigoted. As far his public spirit, he is the one Persian I know of who, being in charge of big religious trust (*vaqf*) properties, devotes the income from them (along with much of his own) to such objects as education (his school at Birjand contains 300 boys between 6 and 18, and 80 girls), public works (he

> has installed a piped drinking-water supply for Birjand town from hills 6 miles away), agricultural improvement (he has distributed free to his tenants large numbers of valuable grafts of fruit-trees and of the pistachio nut, at great expense to himself), an so on. He is hospitable in a big way, especially to the poor. With all this, he is full of humour and fun and excellent company, quite free from any kind of swank either about his ancient lineage or about his doing.[115]

Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II Alam died of heart disease in November 1949 and was buried in his ancestral tomb in the holy shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad.

This Amir had married four times in the hope of fathering children. His first three marriages failed to produce him any children, albeit his second marriage was only a matter of safeguarding the family honour. His second wife was the widow of his elder brother, Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, who was not able to bear any children at all. She was the daughter of Sultan Ahmad Shah of Herat and a grand-daughter of Amir Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul, the first Shah of the second kingdom of Afghanistan, and a sister of Sardar Agha of Zabul. Shokat al-Molk II married her only to prevent her marriage to an outsider, which would have been considered harmful to the family honour[116] and would probably break the unwritten alliance between relevant branches of the Khozeimehs of Iran and the Abdalis of Afghanistan.

Amir Shokat al-Molk's fourth marriage (to the daughter of Amir Parviz Khan, a cousin of the Amir) proved to be fruitful. This marriage resulted in the birth of six children altogether, two of whom died at very young age. The other four being:

1 Bibi Fatemeh, married to Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, son of Amir Masum Khan Hessam ad-Doleh III, and a grand-nephew of Shokat al-Molk himself.
2 Bibi Zohreh, married to Amir Esmail Khan Khozeimeh, son of Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh, also a grand-nephew of Shokat al-Molk.
3 Amir Asadollah Khan Alam, who was first educated at Shokatiyeh School of Birjand and then finished the Agricultural School of the University of Tehran. He married Malektaj, younger daughter of Qavam al-Molk, a powerful personality of Fars. Amir Asadollah Khan's political career began with his appointment as Governor-General of Sistan and Baluchistan while still a young man (1945), and in spite of his young age, he was given cabinet portfolios such as Agriculture, Roads and Communication, and was twice Minister of the Interior. With the electoral reforms in the 1950s, Asadollah Alam was instructed by the Shah to form the official opposition Mardom Party to the governing Melliun Party of Prime Minister Dr Manucher Eqbal.

Plate 2.6 Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II Alam (left) as Minister for Post, Telegraph and Telephone under Reza Shah (1939) and his son Amir Asadollah Kham Alam (right), Mohamma-Reza Shah's Prime Minister (1962–4).

As trusted confidant of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, he was assigned in mid-1950s to organize and distribute the 'Pahlavi lands'. This was the basis on which the well-known land reform emerged in Iran with controversial results for the country. In 1962 Asadollah Alam was asked by the Shah to form a cabinet. Alam's government lasted little less than two years (from 19th July 1962 to 7th March 1964) and he was replaced by Hassan-Ali Mansur in 1964. Having served as Chancellor of Shiraz University, he was called in 1966 to take over the portfolio of Minister of the Imperial Court. In this post he aided the Shah in such a way that his influence exceeded that of the prime minister. He held this

post until August 1977 when he retired due to poor health. It was in this period that he began to record daily affairs in Iranian politics in *The Shah and I*. He died of cancer in Paris in 1978 and left behind two daughters.

4 Amir Shokat al-Molk's last child was also a girl, Belqeis Khanum, married to the powerful family of Farman-Farma of Fars and Kerman. Like her sister, Bibi Zohreh, she too died while still a young woman.

Amir Mohammad Reza Khan 'Samsam ad-Doleh'

This Amir was the second son of Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Hessam ad-Doleh II who was given the governorship of Sistan in 1921 by his uncle Shokat al-Molk II when the latter decided to divide the Khozeimeh amirdom between his two nephews. Though a separate amirdom in the Khozeimeh family's traditional realms since the death in 1891 of Amir Alam Khan III, Sistan was more of an autonomous province in that amirdom. Before Amir Mohammad-Reza Khan, his father Amir Ali-Akbar Khan autonomously governed Sistan. In 1921 Shokat al-Molk simply replaced Amir Masum Khan in Sistan with Amir Mohammad Reza Khan, giving the former, an experienced Amir, the amirdom of Qaenat, the traditional heartland of the Khozeimeh amirdom. This exchange of seats between these two amirs had no impact of consequence on the considerable estates of the two amirs in each other's dominion.

Samsam ad-Doleh, Amir of Sistan had a relatively peaceful tenure, spending most of his time and fortune on developing economic and social life in his realm. He had a keen interest in the industrial aspects of development, using his own family fortune for the construction of modern small-size industrial units. By selling most of his lands and other properties in Birjand, he was able to venture on such projects as an electric power station for the province, a flour-mill at Zabol, an ice-making factory, a cinema and a number of other projects. The machinery for these plants were purchased either in India or from Europe, all transported to the Iranian border of Sistan and Baluchistan by railways, and from there, by buffaloes to Zabol and other parts of the province.

Amir Mohammad-Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh died in 1942, leaving behind six sons and two daughters:

1 Mohammad Amir Khan;
2 Amir Ali Khan, who married his cousin, daughter of Amir Masum Khan Hessam ad-Doleh and sister of Amir Hussein Khan Khozeimeh Alam;
3 Amir Esmail Khan, who married his father's cousin, daughter of Amir Shokat al-Molk II, Bibi Zohreh;
4 Ali-Akbar Khan;
5 Hussein Khan;

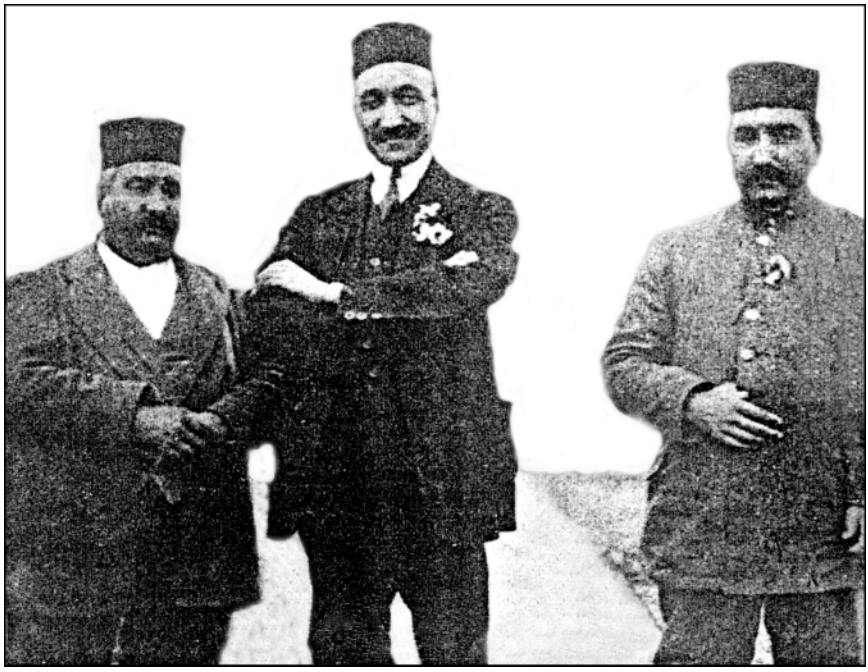


Plate 2.7 Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II flanked by his two nephews: Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh, governor of Qaenat (right) and Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh, governor of Sistan (left).

6 Taghi Khan;
7 Marziyeh Khanum;
8 Qodsiyeh Khanum.

Amir Masum Khan Hessam ad-Doleh III

Amir Masum Khan Khozeimeh, Hessam ad-Doleh III, Heshmat al-Molk III, began to experience the task of leadership of the amirdom while still very young. When Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II was ruler of Sistan he stayed most of his life away from that province, in his residence in Birjand and substituted his son, Amir Masum Khan as deputy governor and acting Amir of Sistan. His family connection with Sistan's influential Naruei tribal chief Sardar Saeed Khan (Amir Masum Khan's maternal uncle), made it easy for him to establish himself as an effective *de facto* ruler. While still a young Amir, the well-known British diplomat-historian Sir Percy Sykes wrote of him in the following terms when they met in Sistan:

Plate 2.8 Amir Mohammad-Reza Khan Khozeimeh, Samsam ad-Doleh, the last Khozeimeh governor of Sistan.

We were met by Mir Masum Khan, the Governor, a boy of nineteen, whom, however, I took to be at least twenty-five, partly because he wore blue spectacles.

We returned the Governor's call the day after our arrival ... He was rather sallow and unwholesome-looking, and, as may be supposed, was ignorant and somewhat conceited, having been a Governor surrounded by menials all his life. However, we got on well enough, especially as I had no cases to settle with him, in which event I think that there would have been difficulties, as his mother, the daughter of Sardar Sherif Khan, must have been taken into account.[117]

When reading these passages, one must be attentive of the fact that Sir Percy Sykes rarely talked positively of Iranians who were his contemporaries. Another European visitor, who met Amir Masum Khan in the same period, was Lieutenant-Colonel Yate, who provided a very useful manuscript of his journey in Sistan. Of Amir Masum Khan's fort and its garrison in Sistan he writes:

> Sharif Khan, Nahruei ... held a prominent position in Sistan politics at the time of the Goldsmid Boundary Settlement in 1872. He subsequently submitted to the Afghans, and Sirdar Sa'id Khan, the maternal uncle of the young chief, was the son of the late Sirdar died at Kabul about 1889. The Heshmat-ul-Mulk had married his daughter, and she was the mother of Mir Masum Khan. Sharif Khan's two sons were both summoned to Kabul by the Amir after their father's death, and were sent off by him to Turkistan, but they escaped on the road. Sa'id Khan made his way to Peshawar, and thence to Sistan via Quetta. The other brother, Mohammad Ali Khan, came down the Helmand to Sistan, and since then had lived mostly with the Baluchis in Sistan ...
>
> Later on the young chief came to pay me his formal visit, accompanied by the Peshkar, and I duly returned it. We rode along outside the walls to the gateway of the fort, and then through it to the ark or citadel in which he lived. The Sartip met us at the door, and took us in to his reception room – a cold place for winter, as I remember I was seated on a raised dais at the end just under the badgir or windshaft, which, though excellent in summer, was a trifle too draughty for the cold weather then prevailing ... The Sartip told us that the fort or citadel had been built by his grandfather, the late Amir of Kain, some twenty five years before, and that the garrison consisted of a regiment of Kain infantry 800 strong, and 500 iliats or irregulars. These iliats or nomads, he said, all came from Kain. They paid no revenue, but performed service instead, and were sent to serve in Sistan. Both these and the sarbazes or soldiers were all quartered in the fort or Nasirabad as it is called.[118]

Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh was a somewhat arrogant young Amir who, as Sykes asserted, 'made himself disliked by the leading men of the province'.[119] Repeated complaints against his conduct in Sistan, to his father, Amir Ali-Akbar khan, resulted in the latter's decision to send his eldest son, Amir Mohammad-Hussein Khan, to replace his half-brother. Amir Mohammad-Hussein khan's party arrived in Sistan in 1898. Amir Masum Khan refused to hand over the fort, pleading illness. Being supported by his uncle and Sistan regiment, his resistance dragged on. An additional force that aided his dismissal from the amirdom of Sistan was British policies in the region:

> Hisam ud Doleh, became a Russian protégé, and looked mainly to Russia for diplomatic support. The Hisam ud Doleh was, moreover, in disfavour with the British, having been dismissed from Seistan, partly their instance, on a charge of tacit encouragement to the Baluch tribes who raided southern Kain four years ago.
>
> Matters stood like that in 1914, when the rival interests of Britain and Russia were suddenly united for the war, much to the annoyance of those Persians who had enjoyed knocking their heads together.[120]

Following these events, Amir Masum Khan stayed away from Sistan for a while, but returned there as Amir of Sistan in the wake of the death of his father in 1914. With the amirdom of Sistan, Amir Masum Khan inherited his father's title Hesam ad-Doleh. By this time, a much more experienced Amir, Hesam ad-Doleh III began to contest the amirdom of Qaenat, the traditional seat of the Khozeimeh amirdom, thus entering rivalries with his young (paternal) uncle Amir Shokat al-Molk II.

Basically, the uncle and nephew had inherited this rivalry from their respective predecessors Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II and Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I. Amir Masum Khan, like his father, though he continued governing Sistan never gave up claims to the 'rightful' title to the amirdom of Qaenat. Still bitter about the 'unjust' arrangement of the inheritance of the amirdom between his father and uncles, he began to use his influence in Tehran against his rival uncle Shokat al-Molk II. This exercise of influence, supported by the British in Tehran resulted in Shokat al-Molk being unseated in 1915 and replaced by Hesam ad-Doleh at Birjand. While there, he applied more strict administration, which increased order in the amirdom.

Amir Masum Khan's rule in Qaen lasted little more than one year, from late 1915 until February 1917, during which time he experienced many difficulties, mainly due to lack of cooperation from the administrators, who remained loyal to Shokat al-Molk. This state of affairs deprived Amir Hesam ad-Doleh, a well-organized and rather strict ruler, of the opportunity of putting his finer qualities on display. In fact he was upstaged by his rival uncle for most of his life. Perhaps his work in developing the *qanats* and irrigation system of Qaenat was his best service to Qaenat in that period.

Amir Hesam ad-Doleh was replaced in February 1917 by his uncle and predecessor, Shokat al-Molk II, and once again his rule was restricted to the province of Sistan. This state of affairs continued until 1921, when Amir Shokat al-Molk decided to abdicate the amirdom in favour of his nephews Hesam ad-Doleh and Samsam ad-Doleh in Qaenat and Sistan respectively. During his second term of office in Qaen, Amir Hesam ad-Doleh had more opportunity to serve the amirdom. Not only was this because of peace breaking out between him and his uncle, but also because Amir Shokat al-Molk II cooperated with him in serving the amirdom. Haj Sheikh

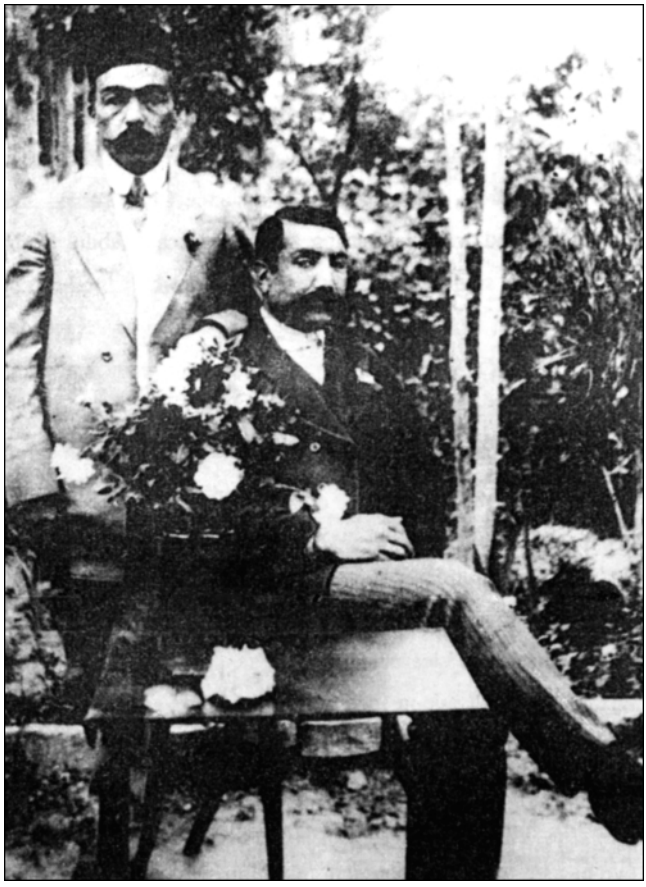


Plate 2.9 Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II (seated), when Amir of Qaenat and Sistan.

Mohammad-Hussein Ayati, the author of *Baharestan*, praised Amir Hesam ad-Doleh as 'a personality worthy of reverence'.[121]

Finally, in 1937, tired of rivalries, disappointed by the results of a lifetime of struggle and aware of the new political order in the country, Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh resigned from his ancestral amirdom of Qaenat, by writing to the Prime Minister (Mahmud Jam) of Iran, who, in accepting his resignation, stated on 30th April 1937:

> . . . it is necessary to point out that your services in the regions of Sistan and Qaenat have always been highly appreciated by the leadership [the Shah] of the country who considers you as one of the most sincere servants of the state, and herewith conveys his gratitude.[122]

Amir Hesam ad-Doleh's resignation from the amirdom of Qaenat put a final end to the Khozeimeh rule in Eastern Iran and thus one of the last autonomous frontier-keeping states in Iran came to an end. After resigning from the amirdom, Hesam ad-Doleh spent a few years in seclusion at Birjand and then decided to travel abroad. He spent the rest of his life mostly in Beirut and in Europe until he died in 1951. From his two marriages, Hesam ad-Doleh had five children:

1 Amir Aqdas Khanum
2 Heshmat Khanum
3 Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam
4 Tal'at Khanum
5 Amir Alam Khan.

Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam

Amir Hesam ad-Doleh's elder son, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, continued with the traditional leadership of the family in the region, albeit unofficially. His career, in this respect, began with his appointment in 1940 by Reza Shah as Governor General of Sistan and Baluchistan, in which capacity he served for five years. Though he was quite young for such a strategically sensitive post at the time, two major factors made him the most suitable candidate for the job:

1 The province of Sistan and Baluchistan was still bordering the British India Empire, and no one else in that part of the country had his family's record of traditional loyalty to the central authority in Iran on the one hand and his family's influence among the people of the region on the other. His paternal family ruled in that part of the country for many centuries, whereas, on his father's mother side, he was a grand-son of Sardar Sharif Khan Naruei and was related to other Sardars of Sistan and Baluchistan.
2 Amir Hussein Khan, though a young man, was highly educated, with qualifications in agriculture from the Royal Agricultural School of Bristol University, a point that would not escape the attention of Reza Shah, who knew that reform in Iran demanded assistance of young and educated men.

In the post-war era, after serving as Deputy Minister of Agriculture for some years, Amir Hussein khan chose to serve the people of Qaenat and Sistan in his capacity as their representative in the Iranian parliament, first as a Majlis deputy (16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th Majlis) and then as Senator for Khorasan and later Baluchistan in the 4th, 5th and 6th Senates. In the last monarchic parliament he served as an elected senator from Khorasan, Sistan

Plate 2.10 The late Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, son of Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III and son-in-law of Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II, Governor General of Sistan and Baluchistan, Undersecretary of State for Agriculture, Majlis Deputy and Senator in his official uniform as *aide de camp* and *chamberlain* to the late king (Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi).

and Baluchistan, Kerman, and Hormozgan, a vast portion of Iran in which centuries of his ancestral rule had firmly established his family's influence.

Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam died in London in April 2002. He was married to Bibi Fatemeh Alam, daughter of Amir Shokat al-Molk II, and had two sons and two daughters.

3

KHOZEIMEH FOREIGN RELATIONS

Chapter 2 contained the first part of the study of the Khozeimeh amirs or governors and the role of their amirdom in the eastern Iranian borderlands. This chapter will include the second part of the study of the role of this small player in the Great Game, mainly examining its foreign relations.

Introduction

A significant part of the role of Khozeimeh amirdom in Qaenat was its foreign relations, mainly because this manifested their role as one of the smaller players of the Great Game. The latter amirs of this frontier-keeping amirdom are still remembered in Iran for their relations with foreign powers, especially with the British Empire. These relations had evolved from the amirdom's basic function of defending Iran's eastern frontiers against foreign interference from the east. This was a role that it played with a degree of independence. Officially the amirdom was bound by the fundamental regulations of the state in Iran to confine its foreign relations within the official channels of central government, i.e. the Foreign Ministry. This ministry used to assign its representatives to the provincial centres where foreign governments kept consulates. This constituted the diplomatic post of Kargozari, and the Kargozar was the government's diplomatic representative in charge of foreign affairs in the provincial centres. The Kargozari of Sistan and Qaenat was established simultaneously with the establishment of the British Consulate in 1900, which was the first foreign consulate to be established there.

In practice, however, Khozeimeh amirdom's foreign relations, like most other aspects of affairs of that amirdom, bypassed the official channel of Kargozari and gradually developed into a unique semi-independent activity. This was in evidence particularly at the time of Amir Ali-Akbar Khan, Heshmat al-Molk II, the first Khozeimeh Amir to serve in Sistan (1891–1914) and his much younger brother in Qeanat and Birjand, Amir Mohammad-Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II, Amir of Qaenat (1891–1904) and their successors. The fact that these two amirs' terms of office coincided

with the duration of capitulation in Iran worked as a major encouraging factor for the foreign consulates to formulate direct and somewhat semi-independent policies in the amirdom. Mostly reflecting on the strategic significance of eastern Iranian borderlands and on the challenges mounted against the position of the amirs both from within and outside the family, the foreign policies of the amirdom were shaped by the following factors:

1 The general political situation in Iran both in terms of the varying attitudes of central government towards the amirdom and its fluctuating foreign affairs, which created confusion in the amirdom and encouraged political initiatives of its own.
2 Political threats posed against the amirdom and/or individual amirs, which necessitated foreign alliance whenever supports and protection from the central government fell short of the desired effect.
3 Internal rifts and rivalries, which in the greatest part of the latter decades of the life of the amirdom increased to a dangerous level, not only threatened the position of individual amirs, but also put in jeopardy the very existence of the amirdom.
4 Strategic location of the amirdom, which was highly thought of by the British and the Afghans, especially in the second half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This was the period in which Iran and Britain were engaged in an intense process of pushing their frontiers towards each other in a vast area stretching from the Gulf of Gwader northward to the Russian frontiers, a long and gradual process which gave birth to the present boundaries between Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Khozeimeh amirdom was situated in the middle section of this stretch of land and this situation increased the strategic significance of the amirdom in the eyes of the British, the Russians and the Persians.
5 The fact that almost the entire nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth century was a period of capitulation in Iran makes it easier to understand why foreign consulates increased their involvement in local affairs of the amirdom and, by so doing, encouraged the Khozeimeh amirs to develop their somewhat semi-independent foreign relations.
6 The geographical location of the amirdom and its long distance from the political centre of the country on the one hand, and the difficult geography of central and eastern Iran on the other, added to the problems of speedy communication with central government. This factor necessitated the adoption of instant initiatives, which could not materialize but on the basis of some degree of independence in the amirdom's foreign relations.
7 Since the amirdom was a frontier-keeping state in Iran, it had the duty to protect the frontier areas and had to perform this duty by implementing policies and initiating strategies as it deemed fit. This

was in keeping with Iran's tradition of frontier-keeping states, and the nature of this duty involved a certain degree of independence in foreign relations.

8 Last, but by no means least, was the factor of political rivalries in the Great Game between Britain and Russia in the vicinity of the amirdom that created a situation the Khozeimeh amirs were able to exploit to their own benefit. Similar rivalries among the Khozeimeh amirs allowed the British and the Russians in turn to exploit the situation to their ends. In short, these two foreign powers on the one hand, and the Khozeimeh amirs on the other, were led to a situation where each side endeavoured to use the power and influence of the other to their own advantage.

Relations with foreign governments

Khozeimeh amirdom's foreign relations were limited to contacts with the British and the Afghans who were the immediate neighbours of the amirdom, and with the Russians who were in the region as a result of their rivalries with the British in the Great Game.

Relations with the Afghans

The Khozeimeh amirdom's relationships with the amirdoms of Afghanistan of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were limited to some manifestations of rivalries among them, which flared up from time to time. These relations began with direct clashes between Amir Alam Khan I Khozeimeh and Ahmad Khan Abdali (later Dorrani) founder of the first kingdom of Afghanistan, in the wake of Nader Shah's assassination in 1747. These clashes resulted in the defeat of the Khozeimeh amirdom after Amir Alam Khan I was betrayed and murdered in 1749.[1] H. W. Bellow who visited the amirdom in the winter of 1871 asserts:

> Mir Ali, transferred his headquarters to Birjand. He was succeeded in the rule by his son, Mir Alam, and he by his son Mir Assadollah, both of whom were subjects of the Dorrani kings.[2]

Although no evidence has been introduced to prove these amirs' adherence to the *Dorranis* of Afghanistan, there is also no evidence to the contrary. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to accept that in the wake of Amir Alam Khan's defeat and murder, his son and successor, Amir Ali Khan, accepted the authority of Ahmad Shah *Dorrani* in return for retaining the amirdom of his dynasty in Qaenat and Sistan. If this happened, it did not last long as Bellow points out: 'on the break-up of this dynasty, Mir Assadollah became independent to all intent'.[3]

Bellow claims a second period in which Amir Assadollah Khan became a subordinate of the Afghan kings. He states that in the advent of the Governor General of Khorasan, Asef ad-Doleh's attack on Qaenat in 1835 'Mir Assadollah, retired to Sistan, and, as an Afghan subject dependent on Herat, sought aid of its ruler'.[4] Once again no independent evidence exists to substantiate this theory.

Furthermore, there was not in existence a country called Afghanistan at the time of which Amir Assadollah Khan could have been a subject and provincial governor. As for Herat, it is noteworthy that both Kameran Mirza and Yer Mohammad Khan, governors at the time, were still loyal to the central government of Iran, and Amir Assadollah Khan's plea for assistance from them would hardly make him an Afghan subject. Bellow goes further by indicating that Amir Assadollah Khan sought assistance from Yar Mohammad Khan of Herat a year or two later. As will be examined in Chapter 4, as a ruler of Herat, Yar Mohammad Khan was a loyal subject of Iran and it was because of injustice to his son and successor in Herat that Iran attacked and captured that principality in 1857. Again, Amir Assadollah Khan's request for assistance, if happened at all, from an Iranian official governing Herat would not make him an Afghan subject. Not only is there no mention of these events in the numerous historical documents I have examined, many documents give evidence to the effect that this Amir of Qaenat and Sistan participated in Iran's military operations of 1836 and 1857 in Herat, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

Amir Assadollah Khan's son and successor, Amir Alarm Khan III, however, revived his great-grandfather's powerful rule in Qaenat. Moreover, he successfully re-established Khozeimeh rule in Sistan. As examined in Chapter 2, at the time of disputes between Iran and the Afghan chiefs on the question of sovereignty over the eastern section of Sistan, this Amir established his authority on the areas east of the Hirmand delta by capturing Nad-e Ali. His dominion was further expanded to include the eastern sections of Sistan after Iran received the famous reply to its enquiry from the British Foreign Secretary Lord Russell.

This development intensified border disputes between Iran and Afghanistan when both parties called upon the British to arbitrate in Sistan. This arbitration, led by General Frederick Goldsmid, began in 1871 and ended in 1872 after the British experienced a great deal of difficulties created by Amir Alam Khan III, the powerful new Amir of Khozeimeh who saw in the arbitration work a foreign intrusion in favour of Afghan leader, Amir Shir Ali Khan. The Khozeimeh Amir detested the latter and it was his 'encroachments' in Sistan that encouraged the Khozeimeh Amir to extend his support for the Afghan chief's rebellious son Yaqub Khan. Amir Alam Khan harboured and entertained Yaqub Khan and his troops for some months, offering his amirdom's support for his much hoped 'triumphant' return to Kabul. This collaboration failed to achieve its objective, as Shir Ali Khan

entered in a pact with the British whereby the nomination of his younger son as the heir to his throne was guaranteed by the British.

The delineation of boundaries by Goldsmid arbitration in Sistan, however, put an end to direct relations, limited as they were, between the Khozeimeh amirdom and the Afghan rulers, while it marked the beginning of a new and direct political relation between the amirdom on the one hand and the British and Russians on the other. These two powers had announced their political presence and interests in Qaenat and Sistan as soon as the British opened their consulate there at the turn of the twentieth century.

Relations with the British and the Russians

The Khozeimeh amirdom's relations with the British started with the work of Sistan boundary arbitration of General Goldsmid in the early 1870s. Real British interests in the strategic significance of Qaenat and Sistan were the natural consequence of the establishment of their authority in the eastern half of Baluchistan and consolidation of their influence in Afghanistan. The Khozeimeh amirdom thus became Iran's immediate territory neighbouring British Baluchistan and the British protectorate of Afghanistan. The government of India attached the highest importance to the assertion of the paramount interest of Great Britain in Sistan and Baluchistan. The British Secretary for India in the Foreign Department informing the British Minister at Tehran of this interest states:

> The [government of British India] are of opinion that in no circumstances should Sistan be permitted to pass, like the northern provinces of Persia, under the control or even the preponderating influence of Russia, and that British prestige and influence in that quarter should be constantly and actively maintained. Though the commercial advantage of the overland trade with India have not been overlooked and are of much importance both to India and Persia, you will readily understand that the objects of the government of India in opening the route to Quetta and pushing the trade have been mainly political.[5]

Indeed it was the desire of the British Indian government not only to create and increase the trade, but by means of the trade to establish beyond a doubt the superior interest of Britain in those Iranian borderlands which border on Baluchistan.

The Khozeimeh amirdom on the other hand, was suffering at the same time from a growing internal disquiet, which emerged in the wake of Amir Alarm Khan's demise in 1891.[6] His elder son, Amir Ali Akbar Khan Heshmat al-Molk II (later Hesam ad-Doleh II), who was serving as deputy

governor of Sistan, felt that he was denied of the leadership of the amirdom by his younger brother, Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, who succeeded the demised Amir because of being present in Birjand. The ensuing dispute grew deeper as time went by and consumed much of the time and energies of the two amirs and their respective successors. The two parties in this dispute employed every means at their disposal in securing the single leadership of the amirdom, each for himself of course.

Establishment in Sistan of the British Consulate in 1900, which was immediately followed by the opening of a Russian Consulate, gave Amir Ali Akbar Khan the opportunity of using the influence of the British in Tehran in safeguarding his position in Sistan and endeavouring to obtain leadership of the Khozeimeh amirdom of Qaenat as well. Use of this strategy coincided with the British policies of securing influence in Sistan and the ground was thus prepared for mutual exploitations between the two sides. Amir Ali Akbar Khan's friendly attitude towards the British, and the encouragement and support that he extended to the British Consul's efforts in advertising commercial advantages of the new commercial road between Sistan and Qaenat, created a situation in which he left his position to be threatened. He feared the hostility of the Russian Consul.[7] His fears were not totally unfounded. Within a few days he was ordered to Tehran. Though this order was the outcome of the Russian activities in Tehran, the British saw it as 'another form of squeeze', and felt that 'a small pecuniary help of ten thousand tumans would relieve pressure'.[8] This development coincided with the appointment of Yamin Nezam as the Iranian commissioner in McMahon's Sistan arbitration. Yamin Nezam, related to the Amir by marriage, had for some times served in Sistan as commander of the border guards. His new appointment strengthened his position in Sistan and his display of friendship with the Russian Consul added to the political rivalries between the British and the Russians in the district. The British suspected Yamin Nezam of being in the pay of the Russian Consul,[9] who himself was suspected by the British of using local clerics to spread rumours among the people of Sistan that the British were the cause of their misfortune. The British Consul General in Mashad, therefore, asked the British minister in Tehran to use influence with the prime minister to remove Yamin Nezam from his appointment as the Iranian commissioner in the Sistan boundary arbitration and to appoint Amir Ali Akbar Khan in his place.[10] This tactic did not succeed, however. Moreover, Yamin Nezam (Abd al-Hamid Khan Ghaffari) was also suspected of conspiring with the Russian Consul for the removal of the Amir of Sistan from his post of governorship. 'The Amir inveighed very bitterly against the Russian Consul and the Yamin Nezam', writes British Consul in Sistan, quoting Amir Ali Akbar Khan, who were both working for his removal and the destruction of British influence in Sistan:

> He welcomed the arrival of the Arbitration Commission, and assured me that everything would be done to give Colonel McMahon and his officers the respect that was due to them.[11]

Yamin Nezam's intrigues in Tehran for the removal of Amir Ali Akbar Khan drew the Amir closer to the British. These intrigues included securing a document for Sardar Saeed Khan Naruei, a Sistani chief who arrived there on 10th April that year. The document demanded Amir Ali Akbar Khan give the sardar, his own brother-in-law, the following villages: Qal'eh No, Khoajeh Ahmad, Sharif Khan, Deh Isa Khan, and Sekouheh.[12] Yamin Nezam sought an interview with the Amir on this subject but the Amir refused to meet Nezam or the sardar, and the problem was averted for the time being. Amir Ali Akbar Khan asked the British to help removing Sardar Saeed Khan from the frontier,[13] in return for removing obstacles he put in the way of trade with India. He, in the meantime, complained to Tehran of the arrangement which was favourably replied to by placing the disposal of the sardar entirely in the hands of the Amir.[14]

Meanwhile, rivalries between Amir Ali Akbar Khan and his younger brother Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, Amir of Qaenat, took a new turn for the worse. Amir Esmail Khan sent a letter of complaint to Mozaffar ad-Din Shah in which he accused Amir Ali Akbar Khan of wanting to give Sistan to the British:

> I swear by the salt of the asylum of the universe that if the whole of Sistan was offered to me, I should not accept it and have resolved never to place my foot out of the soil of Qaen which is my ancestral inheritance, but my patriotism and love of the Imperial Government can never accept that Sistan, which is the rampart of Persia against the Uzbeks, the Afghans, and the Turkmens, should fall with such ease into the hands of the English ... but my brother Heshmat al-Molk, I do not know with what thoughts and opinion, has been taken in by the English and it is now two years since he entered into a compact with them, so much so that he has strayed from the path of justice and virtue. He wants to give Sistan to the English without trouble or hindrance fighting or dispute of any kind.[15]

A further blow to his position in Sistan came from the new Governor General of Khorasan, Rokn ad-Doleh, who hinted that payment was necessary if the Amir wished to retain the Sistan governorship. Amir Ali Akbar Khan had already paid 50,000 qarans to the new Governor General whose father was also Governor General at one time, and who was not favourably inclined towards the Amir.[16]

Facing all these threats to his position in Sistan, the Amir threw in his lot with the British, the only source of reliable support for his survival. This was

a mere regional repeat of the political situation that existed in the Qajar capital. A situation in which bribery and dictatorship left no one throughout the country with the sense of security for his position, his dignity and even his life. Even Qajar princes found themselves compelled to seek the friendship and protection of a foreign power.

The British, therefore, took up the case of defending Amir Ali Akbar Khan's position in Sistan, albeit they found relations with the Amir of Sistan to be of 'negative value' for them.[17]

In a confidential report to the British Secretary for India, the British Consul for Sistan and Qaen describes the political circumstances in which the British had to take it upon themselves to defend the position of Amir Ali Akbar Khan in Sistan. He states that the probability of the dismissal of this Amir had increased by certain incidents of late, and it was plain that no time should be lost in either preparing for, or attempting to avert, such an event. The government of India knew from various sources that Yamin Nezam, warden of Sistan's border and Iran's boundary commissioner had been intriguing for some time, with Russian help, to oust and supplant Amir Ali Akbar Khan. The latter, he added, had managed, by a constant supply of presents to Mashhad, to keep in power. But with the new governor in Mashhad, a notorious Russophile and personally hostile to the Khozeimeh family, this was going to become increasingly difficult. The British Consul adds that two facts which had come to his notice during the previous few days, coupled with the obvious wish of the Russians to effect a speedy counter-stroke to the British arbitration commission, seemed to show that a deal had been made against Amir Ali Akbar Khan in Tehran, and that his fall might take place at any moment. The first fact was that Monsieur Naus,[18] in his letter of the 3rd May 1903, to the British minister at Tehran, explained that the order prohibiting export of cereals was directed only against the Amir of Sistan, who had been smuggling corn across the frontier. The second fact was that Monsieur D'Hoet, the Inspector of Customs there, had told him three days earlier that he had heard from the new Persian Director of Post, Telegraph and Telephone for Sistan that, as Amir Ali Akbar Khan was out of favour with the central government, he (the director) expected to make large amount of money out of him by threatening to send unfavourable reports to the Shah. It was also possible, British Consul continued, that if there was any truth in the unverified story of there being large consignment of arms in the Russian caravans which had recently arrived, it was the intention of the Russian Consul to arm Saeed Khan Naruei and other enemies of the Amir against him and thus encourage disturbances which would result in his dismissal. Finding these events as indicative of the possibility of Amir Ali Akbar Khan's dismissal, the British Consul stated that it remained to be considered whether it was in the interests of the British government to avert this. In that connection the following questions seemed to him to be pertinent:

1 Would a change of governors damage British interests?
2 Was the Amir worth supporting?
3 If the answer to the above questions was in the affirmative, to what extent ought the support of the Amir to be pushed, and how definite had it to be to secure British interests?[19]

He then provided the government of India with his own opinion, which was adopted. His advice was:

> There can I think, be no doubt that a change of Governors in Sistan would gravely damage our interests. Not only has Heshmat ul-Mulk [Amir Ali Akbar Khan] shown himself constantly friendly towards the British, whenever he has not been hampered and threatened by a Kargozar or a Yamin, but it is the common talk of the province that, if he falls, his fall will be due to the Russians, and will be directed against the British. Russian and British power in Seistan [*sic*] will thus be brought to a public test, in which British power will be worsted: and it will be recognised that the British cannot help their friends or hurt their foes . . . the question whether the Amir is worth supporting, must, I think, be answered in the affirmative. It has to be remembered . . . that he is a hereditary Governor, and that his retention in his place is in accordance with tradition . . . It is clear, therefore, that the support of the Heshmat ul-Mulk offers more certain advantages than does the support of the ordinary fleeting officials of Persia, who has no regular *pied à terre*, and whose useful adhesion can at best be only for a few years.[20]

Regarding the extent to which the support of the Amir ought to be pushed, the Consul's advice was that a definite statement should be made to the government of the Shah that the British government insisted on the maintenance of the status quo in Sistan, and would not tolerate the dismissal of the Amir, in as much as the status quo would thereby be altered, prejudicial to British interests.[21]

An incident that occurred in July 1903 further strengthened Amir Ali Akbar Khan's case with the British. Briefly, an agitation took place on the unfixed rate of that year's abundant harvest. The agitation was allegedly instigated by local agents of the Russian Consul who made people anxious about the price of grain by spreading reports of huge purchases for the British and then putting the blame on the boundary commission.[22] Amir Ali Akbar Khan brought the agitation under control with the assistance of the kargozar, by publicly flogging the ringleaders. Being unable to save the agitators from punishment as he had promised, alleged the British Consul, Mr Miller (the Russian Consul) undertook to get the Amir dismissed for his action in protecting British property and interests.[23]

To the British the Russian Consul's undertaking to dismiss the Khozeimeh Amir created a serious challenge to their political influence and credibility in the region. The British found that if Amir Ali Akbar Khan were to be kept in office in spite of Russian efforts for his dismissal, the effect on the agitation would be excellent. For it would be proved that they could help their friends and hurt their foes. It would also prove that they were absolutely disinterested, since, when the British Consulate and shops were in immediate danger of attack, they trusted Iranian troops or protection and did not call in the boundary commission escort, which was a short way off.[24] Continuing with his comment on the situation, in his report of the incident, the British Consul asserted:

> If the Amir is now not supported, after I have taken upon myself the responsibility of assuring him that the British Government will not permit his dismissal solely on account of his punishment of offenders against its subjects, British prestige in Seistan [*sic*] will sink to a lower point than it has ever yet reached.[25]

The British Consul, therefore, successfully attracted the attention of the government in India to the vulnerable position of Amir Ali Akbar Khan, which was tied, from the British point of view, to the prestige of that power *vis-à-vis* the Russians in Sistan. The British Foreign Office and the Indian government took on board the Amir's case to prevent 'British prestige' from sinking 'to a lower point than it had ever yet reached'. In a telegram on 9th July 1903, the India Office informed the Foreign Office:

> With reference to the further telegram from the viceroy of the 8th July, of which a copy was sent to the foreign Office to-day, that Lord George Hamilton trusts that Lord Lansdowne will instruct Sir A. Harding, in accordance with Lord Curzon's recommendations, to support with all means at his disposal the Heshmat-ul-Mulk and kargozar, in order to prevent developments of situation which might become really serious. Lord Lansdowne's attention will doubtless be directed to the concluding passage in Lord Curzon's telegram, in which he suggests that the Russian Ambassador should be informed of Mr. Miller's consistently friendly conduct, which renders difficult maintenance of friendly relations in Seistan [*sic*].[26]

Having interviewed the Foreign Minister, Moshier ad-Doleh, in Tehran on the subject, the British Minister to the Court of Qajar Shah, concluded that: Moshir ad-Dowleh was strongly Russophile and suspected of being actively paid by the Russian government.[27]

An additional problem in this context was that, while actively trying to prevent Amir Ali Akbar Khan's dismissal from the amirdom of Sistan, the

British were risking his reputation as an independent Iranian Amir of Sistan, and they were aware of it. In a letter from Bahrain, addressed to Iranian premier Moshir ad-Doleh, the British political representative in the Persian Gulf points out:

> We have no particular reason to regard the Heshmat ul-Mulk as a especially able administrator or as one specially desirous of promoting friendly relations between Persia and Great Britain. On the contrary we have ... had frequent occasions to complain to Tehran of his conduct. But although he has not been specially friendly, he has generally abstained from conduct strongly or markedly unfriendly to our representative and to the good relations I have mentioned and has on that account incurred the resentment of those who view those good relations with dislike and distrust .. If we had any evil designs in Sistan we could wish for nothing better than the dismissal of the Heshmat-ul-Mulk under the circumstances I have described, for it would give us an excuse for much greater interference than we have ever attempted before in the affairs of the province.[28]

Following the activities in Tehran by both Amir Heshmat al-Molk's supporters and enemies, the new Prime Minister, Ain ad-Doleh summoned the Amir on 7th March 1904 to Tehran. After some efforts to avoid going to Tehran, the Amir visited the capital where he experienced circumstances more friendly than he had feared.[29] Amir Heshmat al-Molk's younger brother and his rival, Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, Amir of Qaenat was also summoned to Tehran at the same time. He had reportedly sent a douceur of 5000 tumans to Tehran.[30] In the meantime, the Khozeimeh amirdoms of Sistan and Qaenat were in a worse situation than ever before. In Birjand (capital city of Qaenat) a representative of the central government known as Moazez al-Molk from Torbat-e Heidariyeh, was intriguing to assume governorship of Qaenat. At one point, it was rumoured that he had succeeded in replacing Amir Shokat al-Molk I.[31]

Meanwhile, still in Tehran, Amir Heshmat al-Molk was rumoured to have been offered the governorship of Qaenat in addition to that of Sistan.[32] The uncertainty of Amir Shokat al-Molk's position in Qaenat apparently continued for some months. The British Consul's diary of Sistan and Qaen reads:

> The Kargozar informed me that the Shaukat ul-Mulk had been deprived of all powers and that the Muaziz ul-Mulk was now acting as the Governor of Kain. The Kargozar seemed to think that it was practically certain the Hashmat-ul-Mulk would eventually get the Governorship of Kain as well as Sistan.[33]

The uncertainty of Shokat al-Molk's position in Birjand had been so serious that he decided 'at one time to pay the Moazez al-Molk tumans 3,500 if the latter would depart from Birjand'.[34] He later changed his mind as he thought that Moazez al-Molk was about to leave. As the dispute over the position of the Khozeimeh amirs of Sistan and Qaenat continued, the British began to review their attitude towards the matter. They saw their other interests in the district as of greater importance than trying to keep the Khozeimeh amirs in office for the mere consideration of prestige *vis-à-vis* the Russians. The opinion was expressed by British charge d'affaires at Tehran, and by Colonel McMahon, that Heshmat al-Molk was not a worthy object of solicitude, and it was probable that they should not have committed themselves to his support had it not been for the attitude taken up towards him by the Russians in connection with the 1903 disturbance.[35] Thus, the British authorities found it more to their interests to trade their support for the Khozeimeh Amir for other considerations. The Viceroy of India wrote on this matter that:

> It has occurred to me that it might not be impossible to make an arrangement with the Persian Government about Seistan [*sic*] affairs generally, which would be a gain rather than a loss to us, and which might be accepted by the Persian Government. Our objection to the removal of the Hashmat might be withdrawn, provided:
> 1 That suitable provision is made for him in some other provinces.
> 2 That the Persian Government give a promise in writing that Yamin will be recalled from Seistan [*sic*] when our mission is withdrawn.
> 3 That a strong Governor to be approved by us, shall be appointed to Seistan and retained in his appointment.[36]

This change of policy on the part of the British came at the same time as it became apparent that Amir Heshmat al-Molk's return to Sistan as governor was open to serious doubt. By mid-March 1905 it was apparent that both Khozeimeh amirs of Sistan and Qaenat had lost their hereditary amirdoms to Moazez al-Molk, an outsider. In a report from Birjand, dated 11th March 1905, the British Consul registers in the Consulate's diary that:

> ... the Muaziz ul-Mulk received a copy of the telegram from the Sadr Azam [Prime Minister] to the Asef-ul-Dowleh[37] to the effect that, on account of his good services, H.M. The Shah was pleased to confer upon him the governorship of Khorasan[38] and Seistan [*sic*] for the current year.

Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I died in March that year, but his younger brother, Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II

managed in Tehran to secure the governorship of Qaenat for himself for a revenue payment of 80,000 tumans annually, instead of the previous rate of 33,000 tumans per annum. The British were, at this time, negotiating with the Iranian government on a deal that would involve Amir Heshmat al-Molk's appointment to the governorship of Sistan in return for the British disregard of the Mirjaveh delimitation in Baluchistan where the Iranians had many grievances.[39] This deal was effected, but Amir Heshmat al-Molk II retired from active governorship, leaving his son Amir Masum Khan in charge of the affairs of Sistan governorship. The old Amir conferred on his son, his own title 'Heshmat al-Molk', himself settling on his second title 'Hesam ad-Doleh'. The British minister at Tehran, however, managed to secure for Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk III the governorship of Tabas, whereas the young Amir had cultivated friendship with the Russians. While stranded in Tehran, he secured from the Russian bank, a loan of £2000, which was the equivalent of 12000 tumans and for which he was originally in negotiation with the British minister.[40] This whole affair proves that the Khozeimeh amirs were, in the words of the British Minister at Tehran, pursuing foreign relations to their own ends. He stressed:

> . . . the fact of course is that all the Persian chiefs and dignitaries are guided in their relations with the rival foreign consulates solely by the considerations of their own personal interests for the moment, and that their friendship cannot be relied upon as a permanent factor by either power.[41]

By April 1905 the British had changed their attitude towards Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk III so much that they considered his return to Sistan as incompatible with their interest.[42] Furthermore, Amir Masum Khan was accused of having instigated the poisoning of Sardar Saeed Khan Naruei, an enemy of the Amir and his maternal uncle, who died on 27th April 1905.[43] The Amir was, at this time, still trying to secure governorship of Qaen by heavy bribery, which was the order of the day. He did not succeed, and his young uncle, Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan's payment of bribes had, apparently superseded those of his.[44] The heavy bribing in Tehran of his young paternal uncle, Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II put that Amir in great financial difficulties as well. The latter approached the British bank in Mashhad for a loan of 50,000 tumans.[45]

This development marked a new phase in the history of the amirdom's foreign ties. A new phase in which the two Khozeimeh amirs changed sides frequently in their relations with foreign powers. Eventually, Amir Shokat al-Molk II gradually favoured good relations with the British, while Amir Heshmat al-Molk III slowly moved towards the Russians. Relations between the two Khozeimeh amirs, in the meantime, further deteriorated as a result of the following developments:

1 Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II inherited his older Brother's estate and title in Qaenat, with which went the latter's old rivalries and conflicts with the oldest brother Amir Ali Akbar Khan Heshmat al-Molk II whose estate, title and rivalries were now inherited by his son, Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk III.
2 First brother, Amir Heshmat al-Molk II's efforts in Tehran to obtain governorship of Qaenat in the wake of the death of the second brother, Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, was frustrated by the fourth brother, Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II, who succeeded in securing the governorship of Qaenat for himself.
3 Amir Esmail Khan's will gave Shokat al-Molk II two-thirds of the land and all of the rest of his wealth. Amir Heshmat al-Molk II contested the will with the support of the Mojtahed (Jurisprudence) of Tehran.[46]

This whole affair made the two brothers, one very old and one very young, prepare for a long period of conflict. The young Amir Shokat al-Molk II, of Qaenat being inexperienced and frail, was even too frightened to establish open relations with the foreign powers upon which he had to rely for support. When diplomatic representatives from the British Indian Empire paid him a courtesy call at his country residence, the Kalateh Akbariyeh in 1907, he received them 'with great ceremony and was outwardly cordial enough', but British Consul for Sistan and Qaen was not sure 'whether at heart he was equally so'. The Consul remarks: 'he is so ridiculously afraid lest he should be thought to be at all intimate with us'.[47]

Moreover, Amir Heshmat al-Molk II remained in Tehran, still trying to obtain the governorship of Qaenat, and thus, uniting the Khozeimeh amirdom of Sistan and Qaenat. By early April 1907, he succeeded in his efforts and attained this goal. Recording this development, the British Consul for Sistan states:

> Captain Watson telegraphs today that he hears the Heshmat al-Molk has bought the governorship of Kainat for tumans 100,000 and that the he has been financed by the Russians. Sartip [brigadier] Mir Masum Khan's[48] immediate departure for Birjand gives colour to the story, which in one form or another has been current for some time past.[49]

This success was short lived and Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk was reappointed to the governorship of Qaenat within a few days.[50] Amir Masum Khan who had gone to Birjand to assume his role as deputy governor, representing his father Amir Ali Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, was escorted out of Birjand by the Telegraph Sartip (brigadier), an influential government official. This development worsened the situation between the two parties. Amir Masum Khan left Birjand but remained in the district in

clear defiance of the orders of the central government. His supporters in Birjand and Qaenat were reported to have carried on an agitation in his favour, circulating reports of ill treatment of his supporters by Amir Shokat al-Molk.[51] The conflict soon escalated and reached front pages of Tehran newspapers. The *Habl al-Matin*, for instance, carried an attack on Amir Shokat al-Molk in February 1908. The British Consul assumed that the attack was instigated by supporters of Amir Heshmat al-Molk.[52] Whether or not he and his supporters were behind this media campaign the fact is that it continued for varying reasons, aimed at damaging Amir Shokat al-Molk's reputation. While still in Tehran and barred from returning to Sistan, Amir Hesam ad-Doleh continued efforts for the removal of his young brother from the governorship of Qaenat.

Meanwhile, Sartip Mohammad Reza Khan, Amir Ali Akbar Khan's elder son, who had been in Sistan acting as deputy governor since his brother Amir Masum Khan left for Birjand in April 1907, decided to resign from the deputy governorship as he could not alone carry on the heavy duties.[53] The end result of this decision was that he was officially appointed on 13th May 1908 as deputy governor of Sistan.[54]

Amir Shokat al-Molk II had by then cemented his friendship with the British who were the main power preventing his removal from the Qaenat governorship, as is indicated in the confidential diary of British Consul for Sistan.[55]

This period of family disputes between the two Khozeimeh amirs of Sistan and Qaenat was coincidental with the heightening tensions in Tehran between the Qajar Shah Mohammad-Ali and the constitutionalists. The British in Tehran had sided with the constitutionalists whereas the Russians supported the Shah's anti-constitutional movements. The heated constitutional debate in Tehran was reflected in provincial centres. The state of affairs in the Khozeimeh amirdom had become a miniaturized version of what was going on in Tehran. Amir Shokat al-Molk II joined the constitutional movement, whereas Amir Heshmat al-Molk III joined supporters of the Shah. The British and the Russians consuls in the amirdom acted the same way as their respective legations did in Tehran. This realignment, in the meantime, was in keeping with the two Khozeimeh amirs' relations with their respective foreign friends.

In June 1908, the Qajar Shah gained the upper hand in Tehran and overthrew the Majlis (parliament). This turn of event in Tehran was bound to work against Amir Shokat al-Molk. The British Consul for Sistan and Qaenat reports:

> I called on the Shokat-al-Molk. He was a good deal perturbed at the turn things had taken in Tehran. His school has been closed for the past few days, the school masters being keen sympathisers with the Majlis and business generally is in a state of suspense . . . there

> was some excitement at Birjand when the news of the Shah's coup arrived. The artillery men made some threats of attacking the school-masters and other sympathisers with the Majlis, but the Shokat on hearing of it, sent for the Yavar [Colonel] and threatened him. He also took the precaution of picketing the streets ... the Shokat received a telegram from the Shah ordering him to imprison or execute disaffected persons.[56]

Amir Ali Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, still in Tehran, offered the Shah a bribe of 30,000 tumans for the governorship of Qaenat, but Amir Shokat al-Molk was made to understand that he could retain it for 25 to 30 thousand tumans.[57] The latter refused to pay the bribe and was dismissed from his governorship. The British intervened immediately and saved his position. The British Consul for Sistan and Qaen reports in his confidential diary No. 32, for the week ending 1st August 1908: 'The Shokat sent the Mustofi to thank Mr Howson for the intervention of H. M's Legation on his behalf.'

Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II had, in fact, been advised by the British Consul not to pay the Shah the bribe that was required of him. Amir Hesam ad-Doleh II continued in Tehran with his bid for the governorship of Qaenat. Amir Shokat al-Molk was advised by his agent in Tehran to extend a bribe of tens of thousands of tumans to the Shah and to the War Minister and the Interior Minister in order to maintain his position. He refused to do so, and the clergies of Birjand prepared a petition asking that Amir Shokat al-Molk should be retained.[58] A similar petition was also sent to the Shah by the people of Birjand.[59] Meanwhile, Amir Shokat al-Molk telegraphed his agent to present to the Shah that since his father's death, he had paid, in addition to the revenue, over 200,000 tumans all of which had been borrowed from Russian and British banks, and had served the country faithfully and had preserved peace while 'the people under him were contented and happy, and foreign representatives were also pleased with him. He was surprised at being threatened with the loss of his governorship unless he paid a large sum, because Amir Heshmat al-Molk offered a large sum as bribe'. He then continued, asking 'if this was to be the reward of loyal service?'.[60]

This petition failed to impress the Shah. As the situation worsened, the British decided to seize the opportunity and strengthen Amir Shokat al-Molk's friendship. The British Consul for Sistan and Qaen asserts:

> ... as matters now stand, if the Shokat is left to fight his own battle alone, it is likely that he will succeed in retaining the Governorship for the present, by practically ruining himself by bribery. In this case he will have little to thank us for, and it would not be surprising, if, when he saw that he had everything to fear from the Shah (with whom in the popular estimation the Russians are

> identified) and nothing to hope from us, his feelings underwent a change. In any case there would be no certainty that after he had been squeezed dry, he would not be thrown over in favour of the first applicant with money. It is thus very important that we should not only assist the Shokat to retain the Governorship, but enable him to do so as cheaply as possible.[61]

By early September that year (1908) news of Amir Hesam ad-Doleh's success in Tehran of being given the governorship of Qaenat for a bribe of 59,000 tumans, which was loaned from the Russian bank,[62] reached Birjand. This amazingly high level of bribery, representing the depth and the extent of corruption of the Qajar rule in Iran, was verified by several different sources at the time. The British legation even managed to obtain the details of this bribery. According to the confidential diary of the British Consul for Sistan and Qaenat, Amir Hesam ad-Doleh had paid 18,000 tumans in cash, the remainder being guaranteed by the Russian bank. The money given and guaranteed was distributed in the following order:

1 The Shah: 35,000 tumans;
2 The Minister of Interior: 10,000 tumans;
3 Amir Bahador (War Minister): 5,000 tumans;
4 The smaller people: 9,000 tumans altogether.[63]

Bribery rates had, by then, increased substantially. A major factor for this unbelievable increase must have been the fact that the Royal Qajar Court and other officials realized that at the height of their rivalries in the Great Game in Asia, the British and the Russians were competing seriously over the issue of the governorship of Sistan and Qaenat, each determined to secure the strategically sensitive position for its respective Khozeimeh friend by sacrificing huge sums. Amir Shokat al-Molk was advised by his own men to bid for a higher amount to retain the governorship. The British realized that if this was done the blackmailing would go on indefinitely.

Amir Shokat al-Molk did not bid and received, on 21st September that year, a telegram from Prime Minister Moshir ad-Doleh, informing him that he was dismissed from his hereditary position. Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk was made deputy governor of Sistan and Qaenat once again, on behalf of his father, Amir Ali Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II.[64]

It is noteworthy that the Russian Consul received the news of Amir Heshmat al-Molk's appointment, three days before Amir Shokat al-Molk received his marching orders.[65] Amir Shokat al-Molk offered, at that late stage, a bribe of 30,000 tumans to reverse the order, but he could not raise the money. He asked the authorities in Tehran for the appointment of an official to adjudicate between him and his brother, Amir Hesam ad-Doleh, in the matter of the family estate.[66] Meanwhile, the French government sent

him a glittering ornament with a document which was an order of the third class of the 'Dragon d'Annam', through the Foreign Ministry. The order was sent, apparently in appreciation of Shokat al-Molk having once entertained a French official, probably indicating a French interest in opening a representation in the region through the friendship and favour of the Amir. He received the order just after being dismissed from the governorship.

The British Consul in Sistan and Qaenat, having advised Amir Shokat al-Molk not to pay heavy bribes to the Shah and his ministers to retain his governorship, with the assurances that the British Legation in Tehran would not let him to be dismissed, felt that the British would lose prestige with Amir Shokat al-Molk and the population if the Amir's position was not restored. He, therefore, argued, in a long report to the legation in Tehran, that it was in the interests of the British for the governorship to be returned to Amir Shokat al-Molk.[67] The deposed Amir, in the meantime, informed the British vice-consul in Birjand that he was prepared to make terms with amirs Hesam al-Doleh and Heshmat al-Molk, on the condition that they accepted the late Amir Shokat al-Molk's will as a valid instrument, and that if Amir Hesam ad-Doleh insisted on a division of the property without reference to the will, he would agree provided that his original portion, inherited from his father and squandered by late Shokat al-Molk I during the present Shokat al-Molk's minority remained intact.[68] An agreement was concluded on that basis on 24th December 1908. Amir Shokat al-Molk's fortune was to change soon, as Mohammad Ali Shah was toppled by the constitutionalists on 5th July 1909. The British Consul's confidential diary of Sistan for the week ending 4th September 1909, reports under the entry for 1st September that:

> Shokat al-Molk has been appointed Governor of Kain but that the news has not been made public yet. The Shokat, after taking over charge, has been instructed to recover from the Hissam all the revenue collected by him and to send him and his son, the Heshmat al-Molk, to Sistan.[69]

Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk, deposed as deputy governor of Qaenat, refused to leave the district and by mid-September his reluctance in leaving Qaenat was about to end in a clash between his men and those of his uncle, Amir Shokat al-Molk. The British Consul's diary indicates that Heshmat al-Molk had contrived to delay his departure from Birjand by a number of pretexts and excuses, and aided at one time by the Russian Consul and latterly by a medical certificate from the Russian doctor. Affairs were getting distinctly strained towards the end and local feeling was running very high. One or two assaults were made by the Heshmat followers of the opposite party and it looked as if business was bound to end in a free fight.

'Fortunately, however, Baron Tchorkassov had latterly been acting in concert with Mr Howson and the two between them succeeded in impressing upon Heshmat al-Molk the error and folly of his way, and he consented, though with the greatest reluctance, to depart on the 6th December.'[70]

This turn of event, at the same time, was a victory for the British in their rivalries with the Russians in Sistan and Qaenat. The deposed Amir regretted his friendship with the Russians. The British Consul for Sistan and Qaen quoted Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk as saying that his father had written to the *mostofi* that he had been deceived by the Russians, and that they were pressing him for money at that critical moment, and that he was very sorry that he gave up the friendship of the British for that of the Russians.[71] Amir Masum Khan defied all orders and remained in Qaenat for a long period of time. A series of raids against towns and villages of Qaenat by the Baluchi tribes took place in the meantime. These raids were blamed on him by the British, on the basis that some Baluchi Sardars (leaders) were his maternal relatives. New British Consul for Sistan and Qaenat asserts in the confidential diary No. 46 that:

> Amir Masum Khan could, I think, be a strong man but is indolently inclined. He is a Baluch from his mother's side and therefore has many characteristics of that race. Since my arrival in Seistan [*sic*], I have found him very friendly to meet and I am more than inclined to think that he wishes to make advances with the Baluch tribes in the neighbourhood. His ambition to become Governor of the Kain makes him, I am afraid, use this influence against Shaukat ul-Mulk.[72]

Interviewed by this author on Wednesday 14th November 1990, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeimeh Alam, son of Amir Masum Khan, then Heshmat al-Molk III (later, Hesam ad-Doleh III), dismissed the accusation stating:

> The Baluchis were, at the time, using the opportunity of general state of confusion befallen on the province as a result of constant change of administration. They had always had their own interests in Sistan and Qaenat. Some of them could have been angered over the dismissal from the governorship of Sistan and Qaenat of my father who was a close relative of their chief and they probably saw governorship of both Sistan and Qaenat as his rightful entitlement. Baluchi raids were not, however, the only raids on Qaenat at the time. There were raids by the Afghan tribes on the province, because of the same state of confusion in the region.

Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam's statement can be verified by the fact that there are reports, in the British Consul's diaries of Afghan raids on Qaenat in the same period when Baluchi raids were taking place. Amir

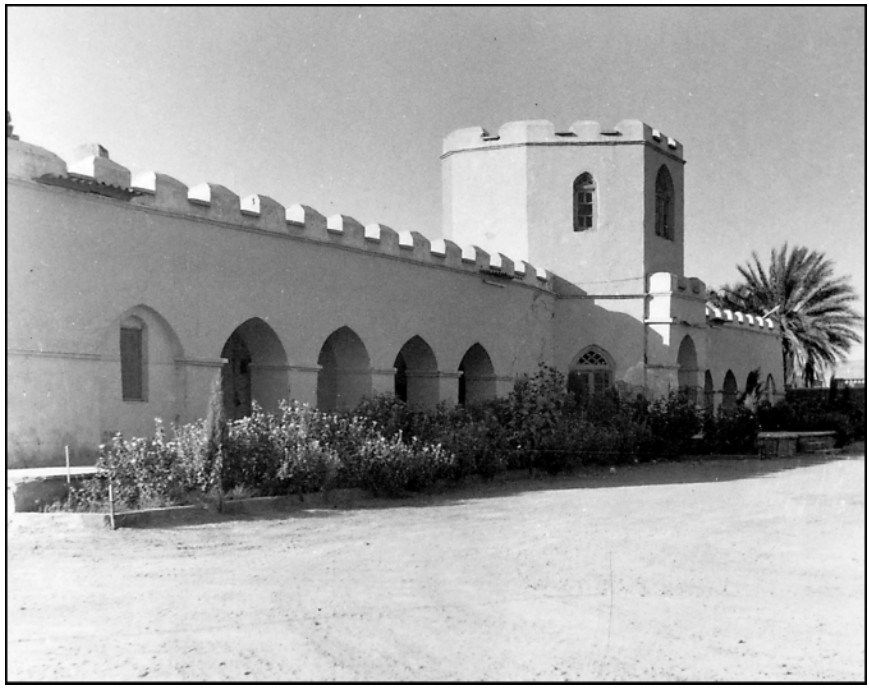


Plate 3.1 The former British Consulate at Sistan.

Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk's statement to the British and Russian Consuls, at the time, that: 'he had received instruction from Tehran to proceed against the [Baluchi] raiders and to recover the stolen property'. And that: 'it was practically impossible to corner these nomads in their own hills',[73] does not seem to have convinced the British and the Russians. The Russians, wishing to bridge the gap between themselves and Amir Shokat al-Molk, found this situation a good opportunity for trying to win over his friendship and co-operation. The Russian Consul in Sistan, Baron Tchorkassov, wrote a letter to Amir Shokat al-Molk II, on 12th March 1911, offering assistance to his would-be campaign against Baluchi tribes:

> I beg to remind your excellency of the extent and heartiness of my friendship towards you. I have for a long time awaited a fit opportunity to prove it. Now, lawless doings of Heshmat ul-Mulk, his secret instigation and other actions causing mischief and damage to your province passed all bounds and I and the British Consul cannot restrain ourselves and are prepared to assist you in any way possible.[74]

This whole affair drove Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk III further away from the British and Russians. Not only did his relations with the foreign powers never recovered adequately, but he gradually developed an anti-foreign policy. The British also never trusted him again and showed their distrust to his son, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam, as the latter remembers. The British, in the meantime, endeavoured in Tehran to obtain Amir Heshmat al-Molk's dismissal from the governorship of Sistan. The confidential diary of the British Consul for Sistan records the '*good news*' that the British minister informed the consul in Sistan that Iranian Foreign Ministry had promised to arrange the recall of Heshmat al-Molk as soon as possible.[75]

The British by then were thoroughly disappointed with Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk, while not thoroughly happy with Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk either, describing the former as 'ignorant' and the latter as 'a weak man'.[76]

However, continued disputes between the two Khozeimeh amirs together with general confusion resulting from the repeated raids on Qaenat by the Baluchi and Afghan tribes created an atmosphere of uncertainty in the district. The government in Tehran assigned a Haji Nasir as-Saltaneh as 'Sarhad-Dar' or frontier-keeper, an authority temporarily representing central government in that frontier district to restore order. After a year of effort, he failed to bring about peace in the Khozeimeh amirdom. Consequently, he recommended the dismissal of the hereditary governors of both Sistan and Qaenat,[77] to be replaced by fresh men from elsewhere to be in charge of the revenue, the army and justice affairs. These measures made Amir Shokat al-Molk telegraph Tehran to resign from the governorship.[78] His resignation was not accepted. Both the British and the Russians representations in Tehran supported his views. Meanwhile, Amir Shokat al-Molk reconciled with his nephew, Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk, on the occasion of the latter's marriage when the former gave him an expensive present and entertained him lavishly for his wedding.[79] This time Amir Masum Khan married the daughter of Mirza Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Rafii, son of Mirza Rafi Khan of Sunni-Khaneh, who bore Amir Alam Khan, Amir Masum Khan's younger son. A year later, in August 1913, Amir Ali Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, his son Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk and Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk received telegrams from the Ministry of the Interior and from the President of the Majlis, insisting on their attendance in Tehran. Amir Ali Akbar Khan was too old to travel, and the other two proved to be reluctant to go, as Major Prideaux of the British Consulate of Sistan indicates in his consular diary 30th August 1913.[80] However, the British Consulate issued a warning to the three amirs that if they disobeyed the orders from Tehran, 'worse things would befall the family'.[81] This warning made Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk claim that the summons was related to some kind of British intrigue in Tehran. He wrote to the British Consul enquiring:

> Seeing that the authorities have ordered me to present myself at Tehran and I do not know at all the cause and reason of my having been summoned, I request firstly that you very kindly will write me what you know regarding this. Secondly, please say if after my arrival at Tehran I shall receive assistance and help in my affairs from the British Legation and yourself. Thirdly, please write whether you yourself, during the period of your stay in this province have ever observed (God forbid), disrespect and anything but devotion and sincerity from me to yourself or anything peculiar or contrary to the usages required for the maintenance of proper friendly relations.[82]

Amir Masum Khan's suspicions were confirmed as the British Consul replying to his letter, stated:

> You have undoubtedly been summoned to Tehran at the instance of the British Legation to answer for the loss which have occurred to British subjects at the hands of Baluch, Afghan, and Sistan robbers during your incumbency of the Government of Sistan as the Deputy Governor of your father His Excellency . . . The extent of our claims is about tumans 26,500, and in addition as a sign of the displeasure of His Britannic Majesty's Government at your neglect and disregard for British interests, the Persian Government have been requested to prohibit you from returning to the vicinity of Qaen and Sistan for some time to come . . . I feel sure that you will be acting wisely by going to Tehran and your compliance with the orders of your Government will certainly be a source of pleasure both to the Cabinet and to His Britannic Majesty's minister.[83]

Meanwhile, Amir Ali Akbar Khan Hesam ad-Doleh II, Heshmat al-Molk II, died on 22nd January 1915.[84] His elder son, Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh, was still deputy governor of Sistan, whereas his fourth son, Amir Masum Khan Heshmat al-Molk III, kept away from Sistan and Qaenat, but inherited the father's title of 'Hesam ad-Doleh'. He will accordingly be referred to as Hesam ad-Doleh III henceforth in this work. At the same time a new wave of campaign against Amir Shokat al-Molk, then Amir of Qaenat and Sistan, began in Tehran. The first of a series of newspaper articles accusing him of all manner of swindles appeared in January 1915.[85] These accusations soon continued to take a political shape and the Amir was soon to be accused of being an Anglophile and working for the interests of the British.

Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III, still stranded in Tehran, wrote to Amir Shokat al-Molk II on 6th January 1915 asking him to intervene with the British to allow him to return home. Contents of this letter, however, imply that the British kept him away from the amirdom solely

because they wanted to see Shokat al-Molk's rule to succeed: ... *'all their remarks have ended with recommendations for the success of your governorship and they have never laid any stress on the claims of their subjects'*.[86] Interviewed by this author on 26th June 1991, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam stated the followings as being the reasons for his father's involuntary detention in Tehran:

> In Tehran, my father went to see Ein ad-Doleh the Prime Minster. When he wanted to leave the building the officer on the post prevented his exit. He was kept in Golestan Palace, then Prime Minister's office, for six months. The reason for this was said to have been his opposition to the British. After six months, Ein ad-Doleh arranged reconciliation between him and British diplomats, and he, therefore, was able to return. The reason for his opposition to the British was that he protested against hoisting the Union Jack on the grounds of their Consulate instead of hoisting it above the building, and the British, for their part, accused him of inciting and supporting Baluchi raids on Qaenat.

While in Tehran, Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III employed all his energy and influence, not only to return to his inherited seat of governorship of Sistan, but also to resume efforts to secure for himself the governorship of Qaenat. As a result, Amir Shokat al-Molk felt the danger of Amir Hesam ad-Doleh's presence in Tehran was becoming more harmful than his presence in the amirdom. Hence, he asked the British to make it possible for him to return to Birjand.[87] Meanwhile, reports began to emerge that Amir Hesam ad-Doleh was being considered for the governorship of Tabas in Khorasan. The British Consul in Sistan stated that Amir Shokat al-Molk was very pleased by the rumour, as it would keep his nephew occupied and away from 'mischief' in the amirdom.[88]

At the same time, a new development began to take shape which disturbed Amir Shokat al-Molk's balancing act in the amirdom among foreign powers. A group of Germans entered the Khozeimeh amirdom early in the summer of 1915, seemingly en-route to Afghanistan. The British Consulate was determined to detain them for interrogation to find out the exact purpose of their mission. Amir Shokat al-Molk refused to cooperate with the British in that enterprise, arguing that his country was neutral in the ongoing world war. Reporting the matter to his government, the British Consul at Sistan indicated:

> I shall try to intercept them with the assistance of Afghan camel-men whom I can arm, if they hurry through this province. The Governor is really afraid of acting in an un-neutral manner, and is awaiting instruction for which he has telegraphed, from Tehran.[89]

On the 27th July the long-expected telegram for the governor from the Minister of the Interior arrived. It was to the effect that he was to preserve strict neutrality!

> On the 27th I made a final appeal to the Governor to take strong action against the Germans and he said he would certainly decide on his course of action after one more reference to Tehran.
>
> At 1 a.m. on the 30th July I was woke up by the Deputy Governor, who informed me that His Excellency had at last been ordered by the Foreign Minister to arrest the Germans and disarm their SAWARS.[90] At the same time His Excellency had heard that a force of Cossacks was within 16 miles of Kain and would doubtless have attacked the Germans before a force from Birjand could appear on the scene.
>
> I thought the Birjand force should await further news, and be employed in arresting the Germans if they should vacate Kain band make for Birjand or the frontier before the Russians arrived. On the 31st July we heard that the Russians had reached Kain at 3 a.m. They exchanged some shots with the Germans over the gardens, and one Cossack was wounded. At six a.m. the Germans disappeared! It is rumoured that they flew off in a balloon but it is not known how the Bakhtyaris went![91]

Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III was, at this time, given the governorship of the frontier province of Tabas and his elder half-brother who was serving as deputy governor of Sistan received a telegram from the central government ordering him to 'supply 50 infantry men and 20 Jammaz-Savar' or camel-riders for service at Gonabad, under his brother. The men were to be paid from Sistan revenue.[92] By 11th September 1915, Amir Hesam ad-Doleh's governorship was not confirmed as a bribe of 3000 tumans was demanded of him. He asked his uncle Amir Shokat al-Molk to lend him the money.[93] The appointment of this Amir was eventually finalized for the districts of Khaf and Gonabad in early November that year.[94] Amir Shokat al-Molk, still at odds with the British and Russians on the question of his neutrality between them and the German emissaries in the district, began his efforts to patch up the differences. On the 11th December 1915 Shokat al-Molk called upon Mr New, British Vice-Consul in Birjand, and showed him a telegram from Farman-Farma which, apparently and according to his statement had been received the previous day, announcing that friendly relations had been established with the British and Russian governments and instructing the governor to help the British.[95] Nevertheless, Amir Shokat al-Molk decided to ignore the telegram, arguing that he could not trust its authenticity as it was received through the Indo-European telegraph line. He, thus, decided to uphold the policy of neutrality that his country had

adopted in the First World War. The British had by then changed heart once again, and decided to remove Amir Shokat al-Molk from the governorship, replacing him with Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh. The British Consul-General at Mashhad telegraphed British Legation at Tehran on this, stating:

> I have the worst opinion of Shaukat's loyalty. His sympathies may be anti-Russian rather than anti-British, but I believe that he has helped and is willing to help Germans against both of us. I do not think an outsider could be placed in Sistan, Kain, or in either owing to tribal feeling. Shaukat's influence in Sistan is, I believe, small and dislikes it, so that if it is intended to punish him it might be well to send him there. Hisam's influence however extends to Sistan as well as to Kainat and whatever his character may be he will probably assist us at the present time in return for appointment and with example of Shaukat's downfall before him. Without knowing anything of proposal he has intimated he is prepared to help us, signed Haig.[96]

The prevailing political atmosphere in Tehran, after Mohammad Ali Shah's coup against the parliament, was favourable to this change. Shokat al-Molk's sympathy with the constitutionalists eased his dismissal from the amirdom of Qaenat. This was done and Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh was appointed as governor of Sistan and Qaenat, which was the fulfilment of his lifetime ambition, whereas Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk was exiled from Birjand to Tehran. In February 1916, while out of the amirdom, he was rumoured to be contemplating joining the Ottomans, but the rumour was proved to be unfounded. With his dismissal, however, Amir Mohammad Reza Khan, resigned from deputy governorship of Sistan. His brother, Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh accepted his resignation and tried to replace him with an outsider. Reporting these rumours, the British Consul for Sistan stated: 'It is rumoured here that Hisam-ud-Doleh contemplates sending Sartip Zabiullah Khan, the worthless but comparatively harmless, local Cavalry Commander, back to Sistan as Deputy Governor'. The Consul then suggested appointment of the outgoing Kargozar (local representative of the Foreign Ministry) for that post.[97]

Meanwhile, the British found the exiled Amir Shokat al-Molk's presence in Tehran unsatisfactory. The British Consul at Sistan recommended the Amir be expelled from Tehran, because: 'they might lose Hesam od-Doleh's confidence in their ability and inclination to retain him in office'.[98]

On the other hand, the press campaign against Amir Shokat al-Molk, which was going on in Tehran, intensified. Mirza Ahmad Khan Naraghi, who used to be governor of the Shokatiyeh School and was later dismissed for his unsuitable conduct, was thought to have waged this campaign against

the exiled Amir in his newspaper *Shahab-e Saqeb*, accusing him of being an Anglophile. He was arrested in April 1916 by the Russians in Kashan and the British claimed that the arrest took place at their instigation.[99] Still in exile, a son was born to the Amir's wife on 22nd April 1916, who subsequently died. Another development was the death of Molla Mohammad Mehdi, chief Mojtahed of Sistan who was involved in local politics on the side of Amir Shokat al-Molk when relations between the latter and the British were good. The Mashad confidential diary of the British Consul-General records:

> Mullah Muhammad Mehdi died on the 30th January 1916. Of late years he has been quite friendly with the Consulate. He secretly held a considerable number of shares in the Imperial Bank of Persia. His estate is believed to be worth 100,000 tumans.[100]

In August 1916 Rokn ad-Vezarah, the outgoing Kargozar, received a telegram from Tehran, appointing him deputy governor of Sistan. This was done according to the wishes of the British Consul for Sistan. The Consul had asked the British minister in Tehran to support Kargozar's appointment to the post.[101]

Amir Shokat al-Molk's movements in exile were monitored by the British who gradually concluded that he was a Germanophile. His nephew and rival, Amir Hesam ad-Doleh did his best to deepen the British distrust of the exiled Amir. He informed British diplomats that he had heard from his Tehran agent that Shokat al-Molk had recently accompanied Mr Churchill to Lar for a few days. On his return, the British accused the exiled Amir of being so glad to learn that Turkish forces were between Hamadan and Kazrun that he almost proceeded to join them. This item seemed significant to the British when compared with their Mashhad diary information of the same events.[102] Amir Shokat al-Molk, however, returned to his amirdom after about two years in exile. The British, by then, realized that he was neither Germanophile nor Anglophile, but that all that concerned him was preservation of his country's declared policy of neutrality in the war. The British, thus, decided to make good with him by presenting the Amir with a car in the summer of 1920.[103]

Amir Shokat al-Molk continued his governorship of Qaenat and that of Sistan, from time to time, until 1935. On 24th September that year he resigned from the governorship, dividing it into two separate governorships of Qaenat and Sistan between his two nephews. His old rival and nephew Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh received the governorship of Qaenat, and Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh, who had served as deputy governor of Sistan for many years, was given the governorship of Sistan.[104]

Amir Shokat al-Molk died in December 1944, at the time when Soviet Union's 'forward policy' was taking shape in Iran. Soon after the Amir's

death, the Tudeh Communist Party opened its branch in Birjand and began a retaliatory stance against his family accusing Amir Shokat al-Molk of being an Anglophile. According to the British, this was to serve two purposes: one was retaliation against the late Amir's non-conciliatory policy of the previous decades towards Russia and later the Soviet Union in East Iran; and the other was that the Amir and his family were wealthy landlords, representing the bourgeois of the district, so that respect for him and his family would prevent spread of pro-Soviet influence in the province. Hence, the allegation against Amir Shokat al-Molk of being Anglophile, initiated earlier by other adversaries of the family, was propagated more forcefully and more extensively in Iran by the Tudehs. Paragraphs 137 and 138 of British Consul's diary of 18th July 1945 notes:

> The Hizb-i-Tudeh came officially to birth on 21st June when the local leader, Amiri, informed the Governor[105] in writing of the formation of a Birjand branch of the party. Next day Amiri had a long private interview with the Governor, a mild inexperienced young man put in by the late Shaukat to obey orders. At this meeting Amiri is believed to have hinted at 'strong measures' if the Governor put any obstacles in the way of the Hizb. On the 12th July, the Tudeh committee invited all the officials, notables, and general public to a tea party to celebrate the birth of Imam Hussain (this was a move to conciliate the religious elements). None of the higher officials or representatives of the Alam and Khozeimeh families (to which Shaukat belonged) attended, but over 500 other Birjandis did and the function seems to have been a success.
>
> H. B. M.'s Consul-General's impression after a week in Birjand is that the Shaukat's sudden death could not have been worse timed. It came just when the new Soviet 'forward policy' was taking shape all over Persia as a result of the oil concession crisis. The Shaukat's son and heir, Amir Asadollah Alam, is a fine character and a worthy successor to his father in whose place in the Qainat he undoubtedly intends to fill to the best of his ability. But the funeral obsequies and the necessity for him to secure his position with the Shah and cabinet at Tehran kept him away from the province during five of the eight months following his father's death and he has only just [July 9th] returned permanently to Birjand with his wife and infant daughter. Meanwhile, the disaffected elements and would be quislings have made hay while the sun shone, assisted by the blunderings of the well-meaning but weak little Governor. Hitherto at Birjand itself, 31 of local Tudeh members and 16 sympathisers who may or may not be members have been identified . . . As may be expected from the above analysis, the party is one of discontented bourgeois, not proletarians. The unifying motive is jealousy of the

> Alam and Khozeima families and of the rich and successful Agha Sipahri, hereditary Mirakhor or Master of the Horse to the Shaukat whose business affairs he used to manage. The Hizb-i Tudeh has declared war on the Alam family and Sipahri by publishing violent articles against them in the Tudeh press of Tehran and Meshed and attacking them publicly from the platform at Birjand itself. It remains to be seen whether, in the absence of Red Army Tommy – Gunners, the movement will make further progress now that Asadollah Alam is back in the home of his father.[106]

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is noteworthy that the Khozeimeh amirdom's foreign relations were, in reality, limited to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These relations were largely restricted to those with the two rival superpowers of the time engaged in their Great Game of geopolitics in the region, namely Britain and Russia, with the latter replaced in early twentieth century by the Soviet Union. Geopolitically, conflicts between the Khozeimeh amirs over their dominion on the one hand, and Anglo-Russian rivalries in the eastern parts of Iran, on the other, were the main determining factors shaping these relations. Anglo-Soviet rivalries in eastern Iran in the period from the 1920s to the 1940s gave a new dimension to the Great Game. The Soviet Consulate at Zabol (Sistan) was closed in 1930 on the order of Reza Shah Pahlavi whose government argued that there was no reason for a Soviet Consulate in Sistan as no Soviet nationals resided in that district. This move was in keeping with the new regime's policy of cancelling capitulation throughout Iran. Nevertheless, a consular agent was kept in the region (Zahedan) by the Soviets. The British Consulate remained operational because of the presence in the province of a sizeable British Indian subjects. In August 1946 local dignitaries like Sardar Mohammad Reza Khan Pordeli, Shah Qoli Khan and Agha Ebrahim Sharifi organized a petition asking for the Soviet Consulate to be reopened in Sistan. They took their petition to Tehran, but their demand was turned down.[107] A year earlier (June 1946), The Tudeh Communist Party, directly supported by the Soviet Union, opened its branch in Birjand, and very soon took over from the closed Soviet Consulate the task of rivalries with the British in the district. The following report by the British Consul at Zahedan is probably the best example of The Tudeh Party branch's new role in Qaenat and Sistan: 'On evening of 5th August party to Governor and notables was given in British Consulate. Local Tudeh received instructions from Tehran to give opposition entertainment at same time but was poorly attended.'[108]

The Soviets, at this time, were still firmly established in the northern Iranian provinces, including Khorasan. Late in June 1945, the Soviet Consul-General at Mashhad made a tour of Qaenat, Sistan and Zahedan. His British

counterpart made a rival visit to the same districts, and the British Consul-General's confidential diary No. 9, reporting on his Soviet counter part's tour, states:

> H. B. M's Consul-General who happened to arrive at Birjand the day after his Soviet colleague passed through, learned from the Governor that M. Abramov had displayed great interest (i) in the condition of the labourers in the carpet factories (ii) in the personalities of sitting Deputy, Munsif, and rival candidates for the next election, and (iii) in the numbers and leaders of the newly formed local branch of the Hizb-i-Tudeh.[109]

This upsurge of Soviet interest and activities in eastern Iran was a local manifestation of Soviet Union's new 'forward policy' implemented in Iran as a result of the oil concession crisis of 1945, and gave a new dimension to the Great Game of East–West rivalries. A concession for oil exploration in northern Iran was promised to the Soviet Union by Prime Minister Qavam as-Saltaneh in return for the withdrawal of Soviet forces from the occupied Iranian province of Azerbaijan. The withdrawal was completed under US pressure through the United Nations, but the oil concession was not ratified by the Iranian Majlis.

The Soviet-backed Tudeh Party's branch at Birjand entered local politics vigorously from the beginning, strongly opposing the British and the Khozeimeh and Alam families, but supporting all those opposed to the families, landlords and peasants alike. Thus, the old Anglo-Russian rivalries in eastern Iran took a new turn, this time with the Tudeh Party acting on behalf of Soviet interests against the Khozeimeh family and its influence in the district. This turn of events gradually changed the political atmosphere, shaping the old rivalries into new domestic politics of the district, which was a miniature of what was happening in Iran as a whole. At the same time, local disenchantments and dissatisfactions translated themselves into membership of or sympathy for the Tudeh Party. Hence, many of nobles of the old order, including Qajar princes who were deprived of their power and privileges under Reza Shah Pahlavi, were to be found amongst the early Tudehs.

In Sistan also, it was no surprise that Tudeh sympathy came from the normally unlikely candidates, from the government officials, from landlords and local headmen, and from merchants and clerics. A savingram from the British Consul at Zahedan to the British Consul-General at Mashhad contains the names of a number of local Sistani dignitaries allegedly sympathizers with the Soviet backed Tudeh Party's Birjand branch. The document states:

> Governor has also recommended the removal of the following, known for their Tudeh sympathy:

Officials:
1 Jalaludin Firoz, Rais-i-Adlieh (chief of justice)
2 Agha Faizhid, Registration officer
3 Dr Kalhudi, Medical officer
4 Agha Ashari, Director, posts and telegraphs
5 Sargourd (Major) Safapour, Frontier officer
6 Agha Malik Kiyani, Public Prosecutor

Non-officials:
1 Shah Quli Khan
2 Mohammad Reza Khan Purdeli (once exiled from Sistan by the late Shah)
3 Agha Sharifi
4 Agha Mirza Abbas Qaimi[110]

Those named above or their relatives would have every right today to challenge these records, but these are no more than interesting reports that could shed some light on the events that shaped the political environment under study. Of the above named, two are of greatest interest here, as they played leading roles in political activities generally directed against the influence of the Khozeimeh family in Qaenat and Sistan. They are Sardar (tribal chief) Mohammad Reza Khan Pordeli, a leading landlord of Sistan, and Agha Sharifi, an active cleric of Sistan. Sardar Mohammad Reza Khan, once described in the confidential diary of British Consulate-General at Mashhad, as 'one of the disgruntled Sardars and landowners of Sistan whom Soviet Consular Agent at Sistan, Konopatkin has taken under his wing',[111] was exiled from Sistan in the time of Reza Shah Pahlavi, for having taken a large number of camels and other livestock in a raid on Afghanistan territories. He was exiled as a result of a strong protest from the Afghan government which, if not responded to favourably, would have harmed relations between the two countries at the time of negotiations for boundary settlement of the late 1930s, which secured half of the Hirmand water for the Iranian Sistan.

In 1945, when Reza Shah's strong rule in Iran had been succeeded by the weak governments of his son, and while the Soviets still maintained their power and influence in Khorasan, Sardar Mohammad Reza Khan Pordeli's men carried out another raid on Afghanistan and took 900 camels. The Afghan government complained to the Iranian government. No action was taken against him, because of the political atmosphere in the country. Any action against this Sardar would only cause agitation on the grounds that Soviet and Tudeh supporters were being 'victimized'. At least this was the reason for the lack of action against him, provided by British Consul.[112]

Agha Ebrahim Sharifi was a cleric of Sistan whose interest in politics was, apparently, a late development. A memorandum from the British Vice-Consul at Zahedan described him thus:

Plate 3.2 Amir Mohammad-Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk flanked by the British (left) and Russian (right) diplomatic missions at Birjand in the early twentieth century before the advent of the Pahlavi regime.

> has interested himself in politics only very recently, although it has been known for some time that the Russian Consular Agent has been making approaches to him through Shah Quli Khan. Since the selfish aims which induced Agha Sharifi to take this step have by no means been achieved yet, a few details may be of interest. He is the son of Agha Mohammad Ali Shariati, who, like his brother Sheikh Haji Reza, was a firm friend of the Consulate in the days before Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Having said this, the memorandum disclosed that after returning from his pilgrimage to Karbala in Iraq, this cleric opted for the position of chief jurisprudent in Sistan. This position belonged to another cleric known as Agha Sadr who was supported by the Khozeimeh family. To achieve this, Agha Sharifi launched a public subscription for opening a religious school, but insufficient funds forced him to reduce the project to a small shrine, whereas Agha Sadr's project for a large shrine was noticeably supported by Amir Asadollah Khan Alam.[113] This move naturally was interpreted as the Khozeimeh and Alam families' support for Agha Sadr and it is not improbable that it added to the failure of Agha Sharifi's religious competition with Agha Sadr and induced him to embark on his adventure in politics in opposition to the Khozeimeh family. The election campaign of 1946 resulted

in disagreements between those supporting the family and the official candidate, and those supported by the Soviet Consulate Agent and Tudeh party. The election campaign turned ugly as several government officials were killed in a riot allegedly instigated by Sardar Mohammad Reza Khan and Agha Sharifi, who was the unofficial candidate. The allegation was never proved and, in an interview with this author on Wednesday 2nd January 1991, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam stated: 'Agha Ebrahim Sharifi signed on the back of the holy Qor'an for me, at the time, in promise that he had no role in instigating the riot.'

This incident was the manifestation of the kind of political atmosphere created in Qaenat and Sistan by the long standing rivalries between the British and the Russians, and then the Soviets, in their Great Game of geopolitics in the region, often involving local affairs. Memories of this political atmosphere linger on in the region, and there are still those who remember the days when pro-Soviet feelings were translated into anti-British and anti-Khozeimeh family activities, or vice versa, with the mysterious '*dast-e Englis*' or 'the English hand' always colouring the background of all stories.

4

THE PARTITIONING OF KHORASAN AND THE CREATION OF AFGHANISTAN

Introduction

Since this work is aimed at the study of the role of the Khozeimeh amirdom in the Anglo-Russian Great Game of geopolitics of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the study of the evolution of political geography of the lands on which this game was played out, and as the partitioning of Sistan and Baluchistan in early 1870s was justified in terms of political developments of the post-Nader Shah events in Khorasan, no positive assessment of the evolution of the said political geography can escape an adequate study of these developments. In other words, since the partitioning of lands forming the chessboard on which the Great Game was played was, in reality, but an aftermath of the partitioning of Khorasan and the creation of Afghanistan in the preceding two decades or so, a better understanding of these events is crucial.

It seems only appropriate to open this section with a quotation from Lord George N. Curzon whose works on the countries of Iran and Afghanistan were regarded as authoritative in the late nineteenth century. He asserts:

> Persia cannot forget that what is now Western Afghanistan has through the greatest part of history been Eastern Khorasan, that Herat has been habitually ruled by Persian sovereigns, viceroys, governors, or vassals, that is inhabited by people of Persian rather than Afghan traditions and sympathy, and that it is severed by no physical or ethnographical barrier from Meshed.[1]

The term 'Khorasan' is an ancient Persian term, derived from the word 'Khor' which means 'sun' and 'Asan' or 'Ayan' which means 'the place where it comes from'; together they mean 'the place where the sun comes from'. Alternatively, the composition implies that the country of such a name is the ultimate 'Khavar' or east. The famous tenth-century Persian poet, Rudaki Samarqandi, said: 'Khorasan is the place where the sun comes from'.

Historically, Khorasan included all of Afghanistan, Sistan, Trans-Oxania and most of Central Asia, as well as the northeastern parts of present-day Iran. In the time of Arab Caliphate of the Abbasids, Iran was divided into three distinct political zones; a middle zone – from Rey (near Tehran) to Bandar Abbas, separated the two eastern and western zones. This middle zone was generally known as 'Eraq-e Ajam' or the 'non-Arab Iraq'. Areas to the west of this zone were known as 'Eraq-e Arab' or the 'Arabic Iraq', and areas to the east were generally known as 'Khorasan'. Many of the famous names in Persian literature, born and bred in that vast province, describe themselves as the children of Khorasan. The aforementioned Rudaki, for instance, says;

> It is time now that the entire world wrote his words
> It is time now for the world to know he is a poet of Khorasan

The eastern and northeastern parts of Khorasan were partitioned in the second half of the nineteenth century, and were included in the countries of Afghanistan and Russia, respectively. What is now known as Khorasan, used to be the largest province in Iran until 2004. The division of this province into three or even four provinces is now being discussed both in Tehran and at local level.

While some Iranian historians consider Afghanistan as having been a problematic appendix to Iran, Afghan historians have, in the past century or so, endeavoured to present a picture in which Iran and Afghanistan emerge as two different entities, busy colonizing each other since the dawn of man's history.[2] How wrong are they both? The fact remains that Iran and most of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Turkey and countries of the Caucasus, Central Asia and the lower Persian Gulf were all part of the old Persian Empire for over 2000 years. From the second half of the eighteenth century, when British Indian power began to consolidate its influence in the largest parts of south and Central Asia, and other European powers, mainly France and Russia, extended their spheres of influence and ambition eastward and continued their rivalries with the British all over Asia. Iranian power was in decline following the assassination of Nader Shah Afshar in June 1747, and the chaos that it caused. By contrast, British India's power and influence were on the rise. To counter the influence of the rival powers on its western flank, the British India Empire began the policy of creating a buffer zone between itself and Iran and Russia, the former suspected by India, throughout most of Qajar period (1779–1924) of being influenced by the French and especially the Russians. Hence, eastern Iranian frontiers became the subject of a series of changes and modification, shifting from the easternmost parts of Greater Khorasan, Greater Sistan and Greater Baluchistan, to the central parts of these extensive provinces of old Persia, resulting in the creation of Afghanistan, British Baluchistan (later Pakistan) and the countries of Central Asia.

The break-up of Greater Khorasan and the creation of Afghanistan

Having almost completed his long and arduous campaign of unifying Iran, Nader Shah Afshar was assassinated in the middle of the night on 19th June 1747 after a brief struggle with his assassins. The next morning the whole camp was in chaos, some leaders took their contingents and headed to their own districts. The Afghan and Uzbek contingents held together, under the command of Nour Mohammad, seconded by Ahmad Khan Abdali. Both these two men, loyal to the memory of the late sovereign, took up arms and prevented the pillage of the royal tents. This act of loyalty does not, in any way, suggest that the Afghans by then considered themselves as being people of a different country. In his first and most important decree issued as the new sovereign, on 16 Shavval 1167 (1753) Ahmad Khan Abdali (later Ahmad Shah Dorrani) does not even mention the name 'Afghanistan', instead he speaks of hopes that he would 'God willing ... bring under control the whole of Iran'.[3]

Having found themselves outnumbered by the rest of the Naderi forces, however, the Afghan commanders led their troops in their fateful march east. On their arrival in Qandehar, leaders of the Afghan tribes decided to go their own way by choosing their own king and creating their own kingdom. They selected Ahmad Khan Abdali of the Dorrani tribe for the post, giving him the title 'Shah' of Afghanistan.

G. P. Tate, an authority on Afghanistan history describes this development in the following terms:

> Sabir Shah who had followed Ahmad to the camp, rejoined him on the way eastwards. This person was one of those wandering and semi-insane fakirs (very common even in the present day), whose incoherent utterances, and irresponsible actions are regarded still with awe by superstitious persons, as inspired by the Almighty ... The leaders of the tribes, such as Haji Jamal Khan, the Barakzai, Muhabat Khan Popalzai, Musa Dungi the famous Eshakzai chief, Nur Mohammad Alizai, Naser-Ullah Khan, the Nurzai Sardar and others, met in solemn conclave at the shrine of Surkh Sher Baba. They were quite unanimous that it was very expedient that they should have a king to manage their affairs, for the times were troublous and there were persons on all sides asserting their claims to independence (in all Persia). The question to be decided was who should be king. Not one of these powerful chiefs would acknowledge the superiority of the claims of his peers. Ahmad Khan by virtue of his rank and family was present at the debates, and sabir Shah's calling also made him welcome. He cut short the discussion by producing a tiny sheaf of wheat, and placing it in

> Ahmad Khan's turban, declared that no one in that assembly was so fit for the kingship as Ahmad Khan, the flower of the Duranis. The words and act of the eccentric fakir were regarded by all as a happy solution of the difficulty. Probably, also, they were regarded as a manifestation of the Divine will revealed through the holy man to the assembled chiefs. The scene was the shrine of a well known saint, who might be regarded therefore as being interested in the debate.[4]

This was how the first kingdom of Afghanistan came into being under the rule of its first monarch, Ahmad Khan Abdali, then titled Ahmad Shah Dorrani.[5]

The name 'Afghanistan' was, according to some historians, invented in the sixteenth century by the Moghul Empire of India, as a convenient term referring to the districts and dependencies of Kabul. The term had existed in the old chronicles, first used in the Qaznavid writings of the thirteenth century, when the term was applied to the mountain and cultivable tracts which were of the Afridis and Vaziris. Sir Percy Sykes asserts that General Houtrum Schindler believed that the Afghans were termed 'Aghvans' in the Safavid times.[6]

The kingdom of Afghanistan that emerged in mid-eighteenth century was largely the home of three distinct races or national identities:

1. The Hazarahs, located mostly to the west of the road from Qandehar to Kabul, who are Shiite and (Dari) Persian speaking, mostly of Mongolian origin.
2. Tajiks and Uzbeks, who include most of the settled population. They are agriculturalists with (Dari) Persian as their native language. They are the descendants of the ancient race who had migrated from Central Asia to Iran. Tate describes the Tajiks as: 'one people and in all probability they represent the original Iranian or Aryan race, among whom Zoroaster published his doctrine; among whom the Greek colonists of Alexander settled'.[7]
3. The Pashtuns, who are nomadic by origin and consider themselves warriors. They are said to be Pathans, the name of the people mentioned by writers of antiquity. 'Pashtun' or 'Afghan' is applied to the tribes collectively, and also to the pastoral nomads among them. They are strict Sunni Moslems and speak Pashtun, and almost all of them can also speak (Dari) Persian.

The history of Afghanistan is practically the story of two great confederacies led by the Dorranis and Ghelzais, both of whom have ruled the territories of Afghanistan from time to time.

Abdali–Khozeimeh rivalries and the partitioning of Khorasan

Nader Shah Afshar's assassination in 1747 marked the beginning of the territorial disintegration of the Persian Empire. The unity of Greater Khorasan had similarly remained intact until that date. It included the cities and districts of Mashhad, Nishabour, Herat, Quchan, Bokhara, Samarqand, Marv, Farah, Qandehar, Qohestan, etc. located in today's Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Among Nader Shah's successors, nobles and generals, Ahmad Khan Abdali and Amir Alam Khan Khozeimeh were concerned that Khorasan should remain undivided in the wake of their sovereign's assassination, each one of them for a different reason. Ahmad Khan Abdali – by then 'Ahmad Shah Dorrani' – the first ruler of Afghanistan, wanted the entire Khorasan to be affiliated to his new kingdom, probably to be extended later to include the rest of Iran, thus, reviving Nader Shah's empire. Whereas Amir Alam Khan Khozeimeh wanted to maintain the entire Khorasan as a part of Iran, preferably under his own rule, probably without necessarily including Kabul.

It was for the attainment of this goal that Amir Alam Khan attacked Mashhad soon after Nader Shah's assassination and subdued Shahrokh Mirza, Nader Shah's grandson, who was installed on the Naderi throne by some of the generals. The Amir dispatched, hurriedly, a troop to Herat, where his brother, Amir Masum Khan Khozeimeh succeeded in capturing the city and its dependencies, albeit this victory was very short lived. This event led to Amir Khan and Bahlul Khan, Shahrokh Mirza's men in Herat, writing to Ahmad Shah at Qandehar informing him of the state of confusion in Herat. This news was received by Ahmad Shah with delight. He marched his troops of twenty thousand men on Herat in the spring of 1749, where he met Herati citizens' resistance. The city was finally opened and he marched on Mashhad where he restored Shahrokh Mirza on the throne, who, in turn, acknowledged the Afghan suzerainty.[8] In the eyes of Nader Shah's generals who rivalled Ahmad Shah Dorrani, by accepting the Afghan suzerainty, Shahrokh Mirza lost the legitimacy inherent in the tradition of the Iranian monarchy. In the eyes of the contestants for the leadership of Iran (i.e. Amir Alam Khan Khozeimeh, Mohammad Hassan Khan Qajar and Karim Khan Zand), Shahrokh Mirza was no longer fit to rule as he had acknowledged the suzerainty of Ahmad Shah Dorrani, by then a foreign sovereign. In other word, Shahrokh himself had paved the way for his adversaries, the Khozeimeh Amir and the Qajar Khan, to dethrone him and dispose of his rule in Khorasan.

Following these developments, Ahmad Shah Dorrani captured considerable parts of the Iranian Khorasan. Amir Alam Khan I marched on Mashhad, dethroned Shahrokh Mirza for the second time, captured territories to the north of Mashhad as far as Quchan, and marched on Nishabur. His capture of Nishabur was yet to be completed when news of Ahmad Shah's forces' arrival

in Mashhad reached him. He had prepared to meet Ahmad Shah's challenge and defeated some of the advance parties of the Afghan troops, when the Khorasani Kurdish contingency of his forces deserted him and by so doing, instigated a mass desertion. Amir Alam Khan was left alone and was subsequently killed, as has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2.

Ahmad Shah's expedition in Khorasan was not to last long either. Events to the east, especially in relation to India, drew his attention away from Khorasan. The blind Shahrokh Mirza, reinstated by Ahmad Shah, was left in charge of the province where his rule continued for approximately half a century. Meanwhile, Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar had taken over from his father, Mohammad Hassan Khan, the task of contesting for the leadership of Iran. He arrived in Khorasan in 1795 and overthrew Shahrokh Mirza, thus putting a final end to the weak and corrupt rule of the grandson of Nader Shah. The rest of Iran was, at this period, ruled by Karim Khan Zand (1747–1799), except for the northern parts of the country which were under the control of the Qajar family. Shahrokh Mirza still possessed many of the priceless jewels that Nader Shah had brought from India. Some of his collection, including the renowned Kuh-e Nour (koh-i noor) diamond, had been taken from him by Ahmad Shah Dorrani, and the rest, including the Darya-e Nour diamond, were seized by Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, who took them as the property of the Iranian Crown, and they have remained so.[9] Agha Mohammad Khan had turned to Khorasan after achieving dominance over the rest of Iran by defeating the heroic Lotf Ali Khan Zand and after subduing the rebels in Gorjestan (Georgia).

Ahmad Shah Dorrani died in 1773 and with his death was gone Shahrokh Mirza's adherence to the Dorrani suzerainty, though in effect this was already long exhausted. On his arrival in Khorasan, Agha Mohammad Khan was greeted by the local chiefs and vassal rulers, including Amir Ali Khan Khozeimeh of Qaenat, who submitted to the Qajar Shah. Nader Mirza, son of Shahrokh Mirza Afshar sent his brothers to Herat and himself followed them shortly, leaving his old, blind and feeble father behind to make his own submission to the founder of the Qajar dynasty in Iran. Having completed the task of returning the western parts of Greater Khorasan to Iranian sovereignty, Agha Mohammad Khan returned to Tehran[10] taking with him Shahrokh Mirza Afshar, who died on the way in 1796.[11]

In his book *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, G. P. Tate claims that at the time of Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar, which coincided with the demise of Ahmad Shah Dorrani's new kingdom of Afghanistan, 'Iran recognized the state of Afghanistan'.[12] The reason given in support of this bizarre claim is Agha Mohammad Khan's decision in sending Hassan Khan Qaraguzlu to the court of Shah-Zaman, the ruler of Kabul in 1796. What Tate has overlooked is the fact that Ahmad Shah Doran's former realms were divided into three principalities of Herat, Qandehar and Kabul, all three going back to their traditional status as dependencies of Iran.

The true nature of the dependency of these three principalities to Iran had always been a matter of various degrees of ambiguity, since officials going back and forth between the central government of Iran and the courts of these principalities had never amounted to the recognition of their independence, whereas sending emissaries back and forth between Tehran and Kabul, Herat, Qandehar and/or Central Asian dependencies had been an ongoing practice since the time of the Safavid Empire. Moreover, Iran's so-called recognition of Kabul as the 'state of Afghanistan' without the Afghan principalities of Herat and Qandehar being part of it, sounds more like wishful thinking on the part of Tate, who must have been more concerned about historical justification for later events regarding the partitioning of Khorasan and creation of Afghanistan for the second time than anything else.

In Khorasan, however, Nader Mirza, son of Shahrokh Mirza and great-grandson of Nader Shah Afshar, hearing of Agha Mohammad Khan's assassination in July 1979, left Kabul and, having put together some troops, returned to Mashhad and took possession of the city, declaring himself as the rightful heir to the Naderi throne of Persia. In Tehran, Fath-Ali Shah Qajar had succeeded his uncle Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar on 28th July 1979. He warned Nader Mirza of the consequence of his actions, and this warning was not heeded. Some Afghan historians view Nader Mirza's claim in Mashhad of being the rightful heir to the throne of Nader Shah as yet another manifestation of Afghanistan's resumption of sovereignty over Khorasan.[13] These writers do not, of course, see it as their responsibility to specify how the rebellion in Khorasan of the great-grandson of former Iranian sovereign Nader Shah against a new Iranian sovereign would amount to the resumption of sovereignty of the non-existent state of Afghanistan (at the time) over the Iranian province of Khorasan.

Fath-Ali Shah, however, marched on Mashhad and recovered all the towns and cities of the province. Nadir Mirza was seized by the inhabitants of Mashhad after he had desecrated the holy shrine of Imam Reza and had slain with his own hand an ayatollah. He was subsequently put to death.[14]

The British interest – a new dimension

A new dimension was added to this general state of affairs in the region in the form of the westward expansion and geo-strategic interest of the British Indian Empire. Britain began, from as early as the nineteenth century, to view the principalities of Afghanistan and to some extent, Iran itself, as a vulnerable gateway through which attacks could take place by either France or Russia or possibly the two together with Iran, against its Indian Empire. Both France and Russia had realized that although it was difficult, if not impossible, to challenge British supremacy at sea, it would be easily possible to do so on land through Afghanistan. An additional source of anxiety for the British was the active efforts of French diplomacy in Iran[15] as well as all over

Asia. A French mission, led by Monsieur Olivier arrived in Tehran in 1795 seeking friendship and alliance. Britain found the activities of Napoleon's representatives in the East, especially in Iran, for the purpose of contracting alliance, hostile to its position in India. At the same time, the British came to the conclusion that Shah-Zaman, ruler of Kabul, was posing serious threats to the stability of India and the position of the British East India Company.[16] This whole situation provoked a wide range of British reactions which were manifested in two different ways:

1 A desire to counter the weight of the French in Iran by endeavouring to seal treaties of friendship and alliance with the Iranians.
2 A desire to expand their influence throughout the Afghan territories and to bring all three Afghan principalities under effective political control.

In the first instance, Mirza Mehdi-Ali Khan, as officer of the East India Company at Bushehr, was sent to Tehran in 1799 to prepare the ground for the launch of British diplomacy in Iran. The following year, Captain John Malcolm, envoy of the Viceroy of India, arrived in Tehran. He gave Fath-Ali Shah two diamonds each worth 50,000 rupees and succeeded in signing two treaties with Prime Minister Haji Ebrahim Khan in January 1801, one on trade and the other political. The political treaty was signed in five articles which not only ended the activities of the French in Iran but also guaranteed Iranian punishment of Afghan principalities if they threatened India.[17] This treaty realized the ostensible object of Malcolm's mission, which was to encourage Fath-Ali Shah to move an army upon Herat so as to divert Shah-Zaman from his threatened invasion of India. The Iranian move, which was motivated by the domestic situations in Herat and by the question of its loyalty to Iran, had already been made before John Malcolm appeared in Tehran.[18] In addition, when Fath-Ali Shah sought British assistance in 1804 in the war with the Russians, the British declined, arguing that the war had been started by Prince Abbas Mirza, Crown Prince of Iran. Fath-Ali Shah wrote to Napoleon asking him to renew their old friendship. Napoleon's personal secretary, Monsieur Joubert was sent to Tehran in 1805 where he prepared a new treaty which was signed at Finken Stain in the spring of 1807[19] by Mirza Mohammad Khan Qazvini on behalf of Iran and Bernard Maret on behalf of France.

This treaty provided for General Gardan, Napoleon's adjudant to arrive in Tehran as French Ambassador, with a group of officers and engineers who immediately started their task of training and equipping Iranian troops. General Gardan was also assigned to conclude a defence treaty with the Iranian government. However, as Napoleon disregarded the question of the war between Iran and Russia in his meeting with the Tzar at Tilsit in 1808 when the two European powers agreed on cooperation against Britain,[20] Fath-Ali Shah lost hope and confidence in the French.

The Franco-Russian agreement of Tilsit, on the other hand, raised anxieties in London and Bombay of a new and more powerful threat to their Indian possessions. These anxieties led the British to attempt once again to secure the friendship of Iran and preclude her from joining the dangerous combination that had emerged in the wake of peace between Iran and Russia. Sir Harlford Jones was sent to Tehran in 1809 for the purpose, and later that year he signed a provisional treaty with the court of the Shah, according to which the Franco-Iranian treaty of Finken Stain was declared null and void. A loan of 200,000 tumans was extended to the Iranian government by the British India government, which also undertook to prepare and train Iranian troops for the defence of the Iranian realms.[21] The British government ratified this treaty in 1810 and assigned Sir Gore Ousely as London's Ambassador to Tehran. Ousely prepared a new treaty to be signed between London and Tehran. Meanwhile, the British India government, anxious about the situation arising from the possibility of a combined Franco-Russian threat to India, and probably uncertain that the direct diplomacy of London in Tehran would pay enough attention to this situation, sent Sir John Malcolm back to Tehran to secure Iran's cooperation in that regard. Fath-Ali Shah refused to see him and his rivalries with Sir Gore Ousely resulted in his return from Iran in the summer of 1810.[22] Sir Gore Ousely signed the 1812 treaty of friendship with Iran and mediated between Tehran and Moscow, which resulted in the conclusion of the treaty of Golestan in 1813, whereby Iran lost many of her northwestern provinces to Russia.[23]

The second British reaction to this situation concerned her relations with the Afghan principalities. These principalities had gone through a long period of chaos in the wake of Shah-Zaman's deposition in 1803. Two years earlier, Shah-Mahmud, brother of Shah-Zaman revolted against the latter, when Zaman was still threatening India. Mahmud declared himself as vassal 'Shah'. The city of Herat and its dependencies were, at this time, tributaries of Iran. The taxes paid per annum to the treasury of Tehran amounted to one million rupees and fifty thousand ass-loads (*kharvar*) of grain.[24] When Agha Mohammad Khan, founder of the Qajar dynasty, marched troops to Khorasan to put an end to Shahrokh Mirza's obedience to Ahmad Shah Dorrani, the governor of Herat declared his allegiance to the Qajar government of Iran. He made the official speech at the public prayer (*khotbeh*) in the name of the Shahanshah of Iran (the king of all kings of the Persian Empire) and reinstated payment of annual taxes to the treasury in Tehran.

Shah-Mahmud, in the meantime, succeeded in dethroning his brother Shah-Zaman in 1803 after the countenance offered to him by the Shahanshah (Fath-Ali Shah). Mahmud appointed Prince Firouz ad-Din as governor of Herat, who in turn, appointed Shah-Mahmud's son, Prince Kameran, as governor of Farah, a dependency of Herat. Shah-Mahmud was dethroned in 1804 by Shah-Shoja and escaped to Iran a year later.[25] At the same time, Firouz ad-Din sent troops to capture Ghurian in accordance with a

pre-arrangement with the deputy governor of the district who surrendered the town. Not only was this move viewed in Tehran as a violation of Iran's sovereignty in the eastern provinces, but it also signified Firouz ad-Din's rebellion against Herat's traditional dependency to Iran. Iranian troops defeated Firouz ad-Din's forces in Ghurian and Mohammad Vali Khan, Governor-General of Khorasan, marched on Herat to punish Firouz ad-Din for his breach of faith and to collect the tribute which had been in arrears for two years. The city of Herat was captured in 1810. Firouz ad-Din apologized for his conduct and sent his son Malek Hussein Mirza to stay in Tehran or Mashhad as a guarantee of his good faith in future. He also sent to the treasury in Tehran the tributes in arrears with the promise of discharging the taxes punctually in the future. Six years later (1816), he revolted again and invaded the district of Ghurian. This time Prince Hassan-Ali Mirza Shoja as-Saltaneh, new Governor-General of Khorasan, recovered Herat and not only did he collect from Firouz ad-Din the tributes in arrears, but also extracted from him an extra 50,000 tumans as punishment. He was obliged to guarantee punctual payments of the annual tribute, to read the *Khotbeh* in the name of Shahanshah and to make the coinage in his name.[26]

In Kabul, unlike his brother Shah-Mahmud who was faithful to Iran and whom he had dethroned in 1804, Shah-Shoja was wholly reliant on the British, from whom he received many valuable gifts. The British envoy, Mount Stewart Elphinson, had signed a treaty with him on 17th June 1809 whereby Shah-Shoja undertook 'on behalf of all Afghans' to prevent any attack on India from northwest of that country.[27] This agreement did not survive for long as Shah-Shoja was dethroned in the same year. Shah-Mahmud's struggle against Shah-Shoja brought much chaos to the Afghan dependencies of Iran. Shah-Mahmud eventually succeeded in settling in Herat with his son Prince Kameran with the consent of Tehran. Chaos in Kabul and Qandehar deepened as Shah-Shoja was recalled in 1917 by Sardar Mohammad Azim Khan to become 'Shah of Afghanistan' in Kabul. This chaotic state of affairs worsened as Sardar Mohammad Azim Khan fought Shah-Shoja, the so-called monarch he himself selected for all Afghanistan. Shah-Shoja was defeated and forced out of Qandehar, and the Sardar lost Kabul to Dust Mohammad Khan. The newcomer and his brother, Kohandel Khan, divided the principalities of Kabul and Qandehar between themselves.[28]

In Herat, Shah-Mahmud and his son Kameran, the last of the Abdalis, fell out and fought a number of times against one another (1820–1821) until the people of Herat mediated between them and arranged for Mahmud to remain Shah with Kameran prime minister.[29] Firouz ad-Din had already escaped to Mashhad when Shah-Mahmud arrived in Herat in 1818. He had taken refuge with the Governor-General of Khorasan.

British direct diplomacy in Afghanistan, by this time, succeeded in establishing a considerable degree of influence, especially in the principality of Kabul. In Iran, a series of events further provoked British apprehension

concerning the geopolitical situation in Central Asia. Iran fought another war with Russia which resulted in the conclusion of the disastrous treaty of Turkmanchai in 1828 with the mediation of Sir John MacDonald Kinner, British envoy in Tehran.[30] This treaty, which was signed on 21st February 1828, granted the Russians the right of capitulation, excluding Russian subjects from prosecution under Iranian laws.[31] Although the British and other foreign subjects were later granted the same right, the sudden expansion of Russian influence in Iran in the wake of this treaty gave rise to increased British anxieties about the Russian threat via Iran to their possessions in India, bringing the strategic importance of Herat to their attention more than ever before. The followings are examples of the views expressed confidentially to the British government by British diplomats in Iran:

> The key of all Afghanistan towards north is Herat.
>
> The country between the frontiers of Persia and India is far more productive than I had imagined it to be; and I can assure ... that there is no impediment, either from the physical features of the country or from the deficiency of supplies, to the march of a large army from the frontiers of Georgia to Kandahar, or, as I believe, to the Indus.
>
> There is therefore ... no security for India in the nature of the country through which an army would have to pass to invade it from this side. On the contrary, the whole line is peculiarly favourable for such an enterprise.[32]

The anxiety over Russian designs on Herat and eventually, India, become an obsession among the British, especially after arrival in Herat of Count Simonich, the Russian envoy in Tehran, with the Iranian troops in 1838. Suspicious of this move, the British minister in Tehran told his government:

> ... it is currently reported and believed here, though I cannot say on what grounds, that there is a secret arrangement between Persia and Russia to exchange Herat for some of the districts beyond the Arras which formerly belonged to Persia. This report was first mentioned to me at Tehran in March last; but I then paid no attention to it, because I could not see how Russia was to get at Herat, and I still am inclined to regard it as probably unfounded, though Count Simonich certainly threatened Mahommed Ameen, a servant of Yar Mahommed Khan (who was sent with a message from his master to the Persian camp) that if Herat did not surrender to the Shah, he would march a Russian army against it.[33]

In a letter to Sir John McNeil, British Minister Plenipotentiary at Tehran, the Secretary to the government of India states:

> The political interests of Great Britain and of British India are even more concerned that their commercial interests in the exemption of the countries between India and Persia from foreign aggression from the westward. There is too much reason to apprehend that Persia, under its present sovereign, has evinced an unprecedented degree of subserviency to Russian counsels ... The pertinacity with which Persian government has persisted in this design ...[34] is of itself a sufficient ground for apprehending the existence of some ulterior and unfriendly design towards our interests.[35]

Russophobia became widespread in India, and the theory of a Russian threat to British possessions in India via Iran and Afghanistan had become so realistic in the eyes of the British that fortification of the countries of Afghanistan against this threat became not only the cornerstone of the foreign policy concerns of British India in Asia but a kind of universal obsession among British politicians, diplomats and military officers alike. This apprehension of a Russo-Iranian design on India was further aggravated by an approach made by Iran to Sardar Kohandel Khan of Qandehar, who had renewed his predecessor's loyalty to the Iranian government. A treaty was signed in 1838 between Mohammad Shah Qajar and Kohandel Khan whereby, the governor of Qandehar engaged his principality to renew its historical dependence to Iran in return for Iranian protection. The Shah also, according to article I of the treaty, was to bestow the principality of Herat onto the ruler of Qandehar 'as a reward for their faithful services performed to him since his accession to the throne of Persia'.[36] This treaty is said to have been signed by Count Simonich as the guarantor on his own behalf as representative of Russia in Iran. The British felt this whole affair to be yet another proof of a Russo-Iranian design on countries on the way to India. This suspicion provoked great alarm among the British and paved the ground for Sir John McNeil's great design of creating a buffer state between India and Russia, thus signalling the beginning of the Great Game. He wrote in August 1838:

> If the treaty has really been guaranteed by Russia, and not by Count Simonich personally, Russia becomes by it indisputable mistress of the destinies, political and commercial, of all Central Asia; for Great Britain, having been forced back to the Indus, Khiva and Bokhara must submit if they are attacked; while Persia and Afghanistan will already be entirely at her disposal.[37]

Observing these developments with dismay, as they could no longer rely upon the ability of the Afghan chiefs to play the role of a barrier separating

India from the potential threats coming from the west and northwest, the British decided to apply the policy of direct intervention in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Prince Kameran, Tehran's appointed governor of Herat, styled himself in 1829 as 'Shah' of that principality[38] and began a series of raids and incursions against other Iranian territories, especially in Sistan. These acts of rebellion angered the central government in Tehran, which was already agitated by the rebellion and lawlessness taking place in Marv, Khiveh and Bokhara in Central Asia, the countries of Turkmans and Uzbeks who 'had then continued depredations in Asterabad and the neighbouring districts'.[39]

The government in Tehran prepared two expeditions in 1836, one against Herat and the other against Marv, Khiveh and Bokhara, which was to proceed to the northeastern after Herat was subdued. The expedition against Herat began its march in 1937. Prince Kameran, seeing no hope of assistance from any quarter, turned to Sir John McNeil, British minister in Tehran. McNeil protested against the action of the Iranian government knowing full well that Tehran's action against the rebellion of its own appointed governor of dependant principalities was provoked by the governor himself. In a dispatch, dated Tehran, 24th February 1837, McNeil says that 'even if we were to ignore Herat's traditional dependence on Iran and assume it and Iran as two independent states: I am inclined to believe that the government of Herat will be found to have been the aggressor'. He adds:

> Under these circumstances, there cannot, I think, be a doubt that the Shah is fully justified in making war on Prince Kameran: and though the capture of Herat by Persia would certainly be an evil of great magnitude, we could not wonder if the Shah were to disregard our remonstrances and to assert his right to make war on an enemy who has given him the greatest provocation, and whom he may regard himself as bound in duty to his subjects to punish, or even to put down. I therefore doubt whether the measures proposed by the Government of India would have the desired effect.[40]

Whilst the Iranian expedition against Herat was in progress, Herati envoy Fateh-Mohammad Khan arrived in Tehran on the intervention of Prince Asef ad-Doleh, commander of Iran's expeditionary force and Governor-General of Khorasan. Tehran demanded that Herat submit and send a person of some significance to remain in the capital assuring a guarantee of submission. In reply, Yar-Mohammad Khan, Vazir (administrator) of Herat, wrote to Tehran agreeing to the demands for submission and sent an agent to stay in Tehran as guarantee of their submission. Yar-Mohammad Khan's proposals were as follows:

1 There is to be a cessation of war and of marauding; the capture and sale of prisoners are to be utterly abolished.

2 Should the Shahanshah intend to undertake military expedition against Turkistan, and should he require troops from Shah Kameran, the latter is to supply troops to the extent of his ability, and they shall accompany the Governor of Khorasan on any expedition against Turkistan. Should troops be required on the frontiers of Azerbaijan, Shah Kameran shall furnish them in such manner as may at the time be practical, and shall not withhold them.
3 A sum of money shall be paid annually as tribute at the festive of Nowrouz.
4 Merchants from every quarter, who arrive in Herat and its dependencies, are to receive full protection, and suffer no injury in person or property.
5 One person, who shall be a descendant of Shah Kameran, and some other persons who shall be relations of Vazir Yar-Mohammad Khan, and of Shir-Mohammad Khan, shall reside for two years at Mashhad as guarantors. When the period of two years has elapsed, if the Minister of Herat has performed the foregoing engagements, and has committed no infraction, the above guarantors shall be dispatched to Herat, and shall not be detained more than two years. Should any infraction of the above engagements have been committed, the guarantors are to be retained until the time of their fulfillment.
6 A Vakil or Agent from Shah Kameran shall always reside at the Court of the Shahanshah.[41]

Notwithstanding the fact that Yar-Mohammad Khan's dispatch to Tehran indicated clearly Herat's agreement to the revival of its dependence and loyalty to the central government of Iran by accepting to pay its annual taxes, its terms and conditions did not satisfy Tehran, especially in that it fell short of other customary undertakings for submission such as coining money in the name of Shahanshah and having the prayer (*Khotbeh*) read in his name. Thus, Prime Minister Haji Mirza Aghasi wrote in reply the terms and conditions that were, from his point view, appropriate for Herat's submission. The first two points of his memorandum dated 14th Rabi al-Aval 1253 (July 1837) read:

1 War, marauding, and the capture of prisoners shall cease, as all these things are opposed to obedience, it is evident that they will, as a matter of course cease, when Prince Kameran acknowledges subjection to Tehran. He who is obedient must be obedient under every circumstance.
2 As Herat with its dependencies is one of the provinces of Persia, whenever the exigencies of the state require troops to be dispatched in any direction, Herat, like other provinces of the kingdom, must furnish troops and provisions.[42]

Although Prince Kameran was referred to in Yar-Mohammad Khan's letter as 'Shah Kameran' and although it is true that in his reply to Herat's

propositions Haji Mirza Aghasi demanded the title 'Shah' be abandoned by Prince Kameran, the fact is that use of such titles by vassal kings in the Iranian tradition of state organization did not contradict the dependence of the vassal kingdoms to the Shahanshah of Iran. In a letter addressed to Mohammad Shah Qajar in March 1840 by 'Shah' Kameran, for instance, he declared himself to be the 'faithful servant of the Shahanshah'.[43]

While this debate was going on between Tehran and Herat, however, the expedition against Herat was in progress and Herat was put under siege by the forces from Tehran. Prince Kameran turned to Sir John McNeil, British minister at Tehran since 1836, for help. McNeil protested against the expedition and left Tehran in the spring of 1838, suspending Anglo-Iranian relations because, in spite of acknowledging Iran's right to end Prince Kameran's rebellion in Herat, he believed Iran's repossession of Herat went against British interests in the region.[44]

In a dispatch to British Prime Minister Lord Palmerston, McNeil strongly advised the British government to intervene in this affair in support of rebellious Prince Kameran, because the British envoy in Kabul was engaged in a separate arrangement between India and Herat in direct rivalry with the Russian envoy there. He wrote:

> Captain Vicovich continues to remain at Kabul, and I learn from Captain Burnes's communications that the success of his negotiations there will in a great measure depend on the failure of the Shah's enterprise against Herat. At Kandahar our position is even more precarious; and I have the honour to enclose a translation of a draft of a treaty between the Shah and the Chief of Kandahar, which it is proposed to conclude by the mediation and under the guarantee of Russia, and which has for its object to unite Herat and Kandahar under a chief, who shall be nominally subject to Persia, but actually under the protection of Russia. I am unable to inform Your Lordship what progress has been made towards the conclusion of this treaty, or what view the Shah may have taken of the position, in respect to these countries, in which, by this arrangement, he would be placed; but the treaty is said to have been signed by Kohundil Khan, and I am not without any serious apprehensions that, even before the fall of Herat, Kohundil Khan may be induced to co-operate with the Shah; while in the event of Herat's being reduced, I cannot doubt that the Chief of Kandahar will consider it to be for his advantage to connect himself with Persia and Russia rather than with England.
>
> I therefore continue to be of opinion that the fall of Herat would destroy our position in Afghanistan, and place all, or nearly all, that country under the influence or authority of Russia and Persia.
>
> I need not repeat to Your Lordship my opinion as to the effect which such a state of things would necessarily have on the internal

> tranquility and security of British India; and I cannot conceive that any treaty can bind as to permit the prosecution of schemes which threaten the stability of the British Empire in the East.[45]

Thus, convinced that Iran's undertaking against rebellion in Herat would seriously jeopardize vital British interests, Lord Palmerston and the Governor-General of India, Lord Auckland,[46] informed the British public that it was imperative to defend Herat against Iran. Meanwhile a young British officer, named Eldred Pottinger, who had lived among Heratis for some time, supposedly on his own initiative as a Moslem Dervish, was encouraging the Heratis against Iran.

The siege of Herat, however, began on 23rd November 1837 and lasted between three to ten months, according to different reports. Most of the Afghan dignitaries were in favour of Iran's action in Herat: Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul had practically encouraged the Shah to invest Herat; Omar Khan, son of Kohandel khan of Qandehar, joined the military action against Herat; Shams ed-Din Khan, an associate of Prince Kameran saw to the food requirements of the troops. Even Jalal ad-Din, son of Prince Kameran, fought on the side of the central government.[47]

The British observers of the time, viewed the historical dependency of the Afghan chiefs on the Iranian government in a different light, interpreting it variously to suit various arguments. Captain Hunt, for instance blames these chiefs' dependence on Iran on the inadequacy of British policies.[48] This argument ignores or negates the fact that the Afghan chiefs had traditionally been part of the periphery of dependents of the central authority of the Persian Empire. As an example of this political arrangement suffice it to mention a letter by Dust Mohammad Khan, Amir or chief of Kabul to the central authority of the Shahanshah at the time of Captain Hunt, in which he testifies that:

> . . . in the past years and in the olden times, the chiefs of [his] dynasty considered their country and governments dependents of the mighty government of late shahansha and from their heart, not in the form of lip service, joined the government of universal proportions.[49]

As dependants of Iran, these chiefs would naturally align themselves with Tehran in any situation of uncertainty, unless they happened to be conspiring for separation, which was the case with Prince Kameran of Herat at the time.

With the direct and indirect assistance provided by the British, which was an obvious interference in Iran's internal affairs, Herat withstood the siege for several months. The British government in India dispatched from Bombay a naval task force which attacked Iran's southern provinces in the Persian Gulf. Sir John McNeil sent in July 1818 a written message to Mohammad Shah informing him of the British action in the Persian Gulf

and warned him of the consequences of his government's undertaking against Herat. Apart from everything else, McNeil argued in this message that the Iranian enterprise in Herat was 'totally incompatible with the spirit and intention of the alliance which (had) been established between Great Britain and Persia'.[50] McNeil's reference in this regard is not clear as to which treaty or engagement would support his claim. There was no instance in any of the treaties signed prior to these developments between Iran and Great Britain that would support McNeil's argument. Articles 2 and 3 of the political treaty of January 1801 speaks of the Iranian government discouraging the Afghan king (Shah-Shoja) from his possible designs against India, while article 4 speaks of British military support for the Iranian government in the event of an attack against Iran by the Afghan ruler,[51] which was the case with Prince Kameran, whose action was considered by Mr McNeil, in his dispatch of 24th February 1837,[52] as an aggression that gives the central government of Iran every right to punish him. Moreover, article 9 of the Anglo-Iranian treaty of 25th November 1814, in fact prevented the British from interfering in any incident between Iran and the Afghan chiefs unless asked by both sides to do so.[53]

The forces dispatched from Bombay, under the command of Colonel Shariff, landed on Iran's Khark Island in the Persian Gulf. This measure proved to be effective as Prime Minister Haji Mirza Aghasi was evidently aware of the greater importance of Iranian possessions in the Persian Gulf compared with the Afghan dependencies. The British had already begun spreading their influence around the Persian Gulf. A series of treaties had been signed from 1820 with the chiefs of the tribes of the lower Gulf, the traditional Iranian sphere of influence.[54] Though Haji Mirza Aghasi later in the mid-1840s declared all these treaties as 'unacceptable', the position in the Persian Gulf was viewed in Tehran as more vulnerable than that in the eastern borderlands. Thus, the Iranian government decided to abandon its undertaking in Herat by complying with the terms of McNeil's message. Mirza Taghi Khan Amir-Nezam (Amir Kabir) was assigned to meet McNeil to induce him not to leave Iran.[55]

The Iranian government thus decided to lift the siege and to withdraw its forces from Herat without punishing its rebellious chief. Subsequently, the Iranians had to make some considerable concessions in order to satisfy the British. These concessions included relinquishing Iran's rights to the district of Ghurian, south of Herat and north of Sistan. Article 2 of Haji Mirza Aghasi's letter to Lord Palmerston states that Asef ad-Doleh, Governor-General of Khorasan had orders to give up Ghurian and deliver it to the Afghan chiefs after the return to Iran of the British ambassador.[56] Enclosure No. 2 of this dispatch was the English text of an 'imperative' decree from Mohammad Shah to the Governor-General of Khorasan, dated 15th September 1839, ordering him to give up the fort (of Ghurian) and deliver it to the Afghans.[57]

Britain's direct diplomacy in Afghanistan

The whole episode of the siege of Herat, however, increased urgency for the British to expand their influence in the principalities of Afghanistan. Still wary of the possibility of some Russian designs on the Afghan principalities, Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India, sent a mission for the expansion of commerce to Afghanistan. This mission contacted the Amir of Kabul. When the mission reached Pishavar, a letter from W. H. MacNaghton, Secretary to the Indian government, to the mission, turned it into a purely political mission.[58]

Dust Mohammad Khan, Amir of Kabul, received the mission with the kind of enthusiasm which did not last long. His brothers, the rulers of Qandehar, had already revived their alignment with the Iranians, and their treaty with Iran greatly troubled the British, especially since article 2 of the treaty put the Sardars of Qandehar in possession of Herat. This undertaking on the part of the Iranian government to the Sardars of Qandehar remained as a source of discomfort to the British, who considered that 'no state of affairs in Central Asia more favourable to the interest of British India, than the (then) division of power among the several rulers of Afghanistan'.[59] Moreover, the British resolved to bring all Afghan principalities under their influence. They reached an understanding with Shah-Shoja (al-Molk) Abdali and the governor of Sekuheh, both of whom facilitated the British invasion of Afghanistan in 1839 with a force 45,000 strong,[60] and established their influence as far north as the southern slopes of the Hindukush. In the west, Vazir Yar-Mohammad Khan, by then governor of Herat, soon forced Lieutenant Pottinger out of Herat and made overtures to the Iranian government in March 1839 and to the chiefs of Qandehar, to cooperate with him against Shah-Shoja and his British backers.

The rapid progress of the British in the principalities of Afghanistan and the inactivity of the Iranians, however, prevented realization of Yar-Mohammad Khan's dream of cooperation against them. Qandehar was occupied shortly and Yar-Mohammad Khan was among the first to congratulate Shah-Shoja on the occasion.[61]

The British finally managed to conclude a series of treaties with the chiefs of Qandehar and Herat in 1839, thus recognizing these Iranian dependencies as independent Afghan principalities.[62]

The success of the British military expedition together with the treaties they signed with the chiefs of Herat and Qandehar placed British India within Iran's eastern dependencies. It was from the beginning of the 1840s that the powers began to push the frontier areas between them back and forth, a political process which eventually resulted in the formation of the Iran–Afghanistan boundaries.

Though Herat's traditional (historical and cultural) ties with Iran were too strong to be severed by these acts of rebellion encouraged and supported by

Britain, early in January 1840 the British government demanded restoration of Ghurian to Herat. In reply, the Iranian prime minister informed Lieutenant-Colonel J. Sheil, British chargé d'affaires at Erzerum, that Prince Kameran, former sovereign of Herat recognized by British India, had declared himself to be the faithful servant of the Shahanshah, that, 'he merely tolerated the presence of the English envoy for expediency, although he was by no means niggardly in the expenditure of money, jewels, &c and that his hopes were in the asylum of Islam'.[63]

Upon receiving the news of this letter and of overtures made to Iran by Vazir Yar-Mohammad Khan, the new ruler of Herat, the British began to strengthen their position in Herat and other principalities close to the Iranian frontier areas. Within a short period of time between 1839 and 1840, the British reoccupied Kalat and negotiated and brought under their control the principality of Khiveh. Meanwhile Dust Mohammad Khan, Amir of Kabul, had also surrendered his principality to the British without any resistance.[64] Accompanied by 150 members of his family and relations and servants, Dust Mohammad Khan went to live in India. On their way back from Afghanistan, the British forces annexed the districts of Sind and Punjab.[65] These new territorial gains established the British Indians all along eastern Iranian borderlands.

The British government sent Sir John McNeil back to Iran in 1841 to restore political relations with the court of Qajar. The Afghan principalities were in turmoil and the British had strengthened their position in the strategic points near the Iranian frontier areas, including the Girishk and Hirmand districts. During the British occupation of Afghan lands, maintenance of Girishk was always considered an important object, as it not only defended the high road and offered security to travellers but also presented a good military outpost against Herat. When Afghan unrest broke out in November 1841, the governor of Herat was unfriendly with the British. Hence, it was particularly important to the British to maintain Girishk, and with this in mind Major Rawlinson, then political agent at Qandehar, was anxious not only to retain on the Hirmand the regiment to whose care the fortress was entrusted but to strengthen the position with reinforcements from the Qandehar garrison.[66]

Events leading to Iran's occupation of Herat

In Herat, Yar-Mohammad Khan revolted against Prince Kameran in 1839 and took his place as ruler of the principality. He informed Tehran of his loyalty and thereupon ventured on capturing Ghurian (1840) and forced Meimaneh and Hazarah to become tributaries of Herat. It was in 1841 when Yar-Mohammad Khan expelled British officer in residence, Major Todd, from Herat and returned the principality to its traditional exclusive dependence on Iran.

In 1847 when Hassan Khan Salar and Jafar Khan revolted in Mashhad and Sarakhs against Hamzeh Mirza Asef ad-Doleh, Young Naser ad-Din Shah's uncle and Governor-General of Khorasan, the latter asked for Yar-Mohammad Khan's assistance. He dispatched troops to Mashhad where the Heratis succeeded in freeing Hamzeh Mirza and took him to Herat. The Governor-General remained in Herat for about three months, during which time Prince Morad Mirza, another uncle of the young Shah, put down the revolt. Yar-Mohammad Khan was rewarded by the Shah for his services by investing upon him the title 'Zahir ad-Doleh', literally meaning 'supporter of the state'. This title came to Yar-Mohammad Khan in the form of a *farman* (decree) accompanied with four cannons as present from the Shah.[67] Having received the *farman*, Yar-Mohammad Khan officially restored Herat's traditional position as a dependant principality of Iran, by 'coining the money in the name of the Shah of Persia, and by considering Herat as a portion of the Persian dominions'.[68]

In 1850, the *sardars* (chiefs) of Qandehar, later allies of Iran according to the treaty of 1856,[69] revolted against Yar-Mohammad Khan, Sardar Shir-Ali Khan, son of Mehr-Del Khan, advanced as far as Lash, which was then a dependency of Herat. Mohammad-Sadeq Khan, son of Kohandel Khan, occupied Chokhansur, and later entered Girishk. Yar-Mohammad Khan's forces pushed Shir-Ali Khan out of Lash, and defeated Ahmad Khan Eshaqzai, another *sardar* of the district. He invited the defeated *sardars* to unite with him, but before making any progress in this venture he died (1850). Yar Mohammad Khan's son Saeed-Mohammad Khan, governor of Lash and Jovein, succeeded him, and immediately declared loyalty to the central government of Iran by writing to the Shah. Having been named by the Shah as governor of Herat in his father's place, and having received his official dress of honour, he continued to serve loyally, as his father had done before him.[70]

Shortly after this development, Mohammad-Sadeq Khan of Qandehar entered Herat to take Saeed-Mohammad Khan's place, on the pretence that the people of Herat wanted him to do so. Saeed-Mohammad Khan asked for help from Tehran. Iranian troops, led by Abbas-Qoli Khan entered Herat and occupied the citadel of the city in April 1852, leaving some of the troops at Ghurian, where they were later reinforced by Sam Khan Ilkhani of Daregaz. Sam Khan was recalled in January 1853, but Abbas-Qoli Khan remained in Herat as *vazir* to Saeed-Mohammad Khan. The Qandehari *sardars* had also left Herat, on the understanding that as a different principality of Iran, they had no business in Herat whilst Iranian forces were there to continue their protection of that principality.

Apprehensive of the deepening dependence of Herat and Qandehar on Iran, the British minister in Tehran, Colonel Sheil, did all he could to mobilize his government to put an end to this process. In a letter to the Sadr-e Azam (Prime Minister) Mirza Agha Khan Nouri,[71] Sheil warned him of the consequences of 'Iran's interference' in Herat. An Iranian document states:

> ... every day he had something for the Iranian Ministers to do. Finding that his object could not be attained by these means, he wrote something plausible to his Government, and the British Ministers suspended all interactions with Shafie Khan, Iran's Chargé d'Affaires in London, and distinctly informed that until the Iranian Ministers settled the affairs of Herat with Colonel Sheil, relations would not be resumed with him.[72]

Eventually the Iranians gave up and hoping to exclude the British from interfering in Herati affairs, Sadr-e Azam Nouri concluded an agreement with them on 25th January 1853, which restricted both governments from interfering in Herat. The agreement, however, was signed in a way that clearly acknowledges Herat's traditional dependence on Iran. Paragraph 2 of the section on the engagement prohibits Iran from interfering in the internal affairs of Herat, 'except the same amount which took place at the time of late Zahir ad-Doleh, Yar-Mohammad Khan'.[73] More interesting was the undertaking of the British which included that:

> If any foreign power, such as the Afghans, or others, should wish to interfere, and take possession of Herat territory, or its dependencies, and the Persian Ministers should request the British Ministers to prevent them by friendly means, and by advice from doing so, they will not object to do so.[74]

Meanwhile, Saeed-Mohammad Khan, governor of Herat, was overthrown in 1855 by his deputy, Nayeb Isa Khan, whose secret dealings with the British were suspected in Tehran from the beginning. He claimed to have represented the will of the people of Herat for Saeed-Mohammad Khan's removal from the office. The latter was by then tainted with insanity.

Nayeb Isa Khan sent for Prince Yusof Abdali, grandson of Prince Firouz ad-Din in Mashhad, to come and claim the seat of authority in Herat. He entered the city on 15th September 1855 as the new ruler. Saeed-Mohammad Khan was subsequently murdered and some of his and his father's wealth was extracted by the Nayeb and the Prince.[75] All these events took place under the watchful eyes of the Iranians who were neither consulted in advance nor were extended a message of loyalty by the new rulers, a right for Iran which had been recognized by the British in all their engagements with Iran on Herat and other Afghan principalities. Herat's seat of authority was thus usurped by the Nayeb and the Prince who had also murdered the overthrown ruler and confiscated the private properties of the murdered ruler's family. This lawlessness, together with the general chaos that they brought to the principality, forced Prime Minister Nouri to amass troops under the command of the Shah's uncle, Hessam as-Saltaneh Morad Mirza, Governor-General of Khorasan.

The capture of Herat and conclusion of the Paris treaty of 1857

The Iranian troops' mission was to reduce Herat, avenge the murder of its ruler and bring order back to the principality. Nayeb Isa sought assistance from Dust Mohammad Khan, Amir of Kabul, who had, with the help of the British, made a come-back on the scene of Afghan politics. The Amir of Kabul shunned any assistance and, like his Qandehari brothers, cousins and nephews, refused to meddle with Iran's 'internal affairs'. The Nayeb was, thus, left with no alternative but to send Prince Yusof to Prince Morad Mirza as guarantee of loyalty, promising to make up for his conduct. The prince was taken to Tehran where he was tried and executed for having murdered Saeed-Mohammad Khan. The siege of Herat which began in April 1856 continued. Ch. A. Murray, the British minister had departed from Tehran on 5th December 1855, as a result of misunderstandings with the Iranian officials. Mirza Shafie Khan,[76] Iran's Chargé d'Affaires in London was informed that relations between the two governments were suspended.[77] Iranian forces however, succeeded in capturing Herat on 25th Safar 1273 (1856). An Iranian poet (Mirza Shafa) marked the date in the following words:

As seventy three was added to a thousand and two,
it marked the date of the capture of Herat

The British, on the other hand, had assisted the return of Amir Dust Mohammad Khan to Kabul and helped his dominion to expand almost all over Afghanistan. He had taken possession of Qandehar from his nephews in August 1855,[78] and Herat was the only principality that was left outside his newly expanded kingdom. As Iranian forces entered Herat, the khans and tribal chiefs of the entire region went to Prince Morad Mirza Hessam as-Saltaneh declaring their allegiance to the government of Iran. These whole events apparently disturbed the British and Dust Mohammad Khan, the latter being assisted by the former to revive Ahmad Shah Dorrani's kingdom of Afghanistan.

British Foreign Office confidential documents contain messages to the British from a certain 'Essan Khan' asking them to intervene in Herat. This name does not appear in the local documents and is unfamiliar within local tradition. The only likelihood that this author can see is that the messages came from Nayeb Isa Khan. He, according to these documents, sent a petition[79] to Mr Murray pledging himself, the principality and the people of Herat to the British, asking them to take over his principality. His double dealings must have become known to the Iranians, and probably this is why he was killed on his way back from the Iranian camp outside the city of Herat. The Iranians appointed Sultan Ahmad Khan, son of Mohammad Azim Khan, who had turned against Dust Mohammad Khan, his own

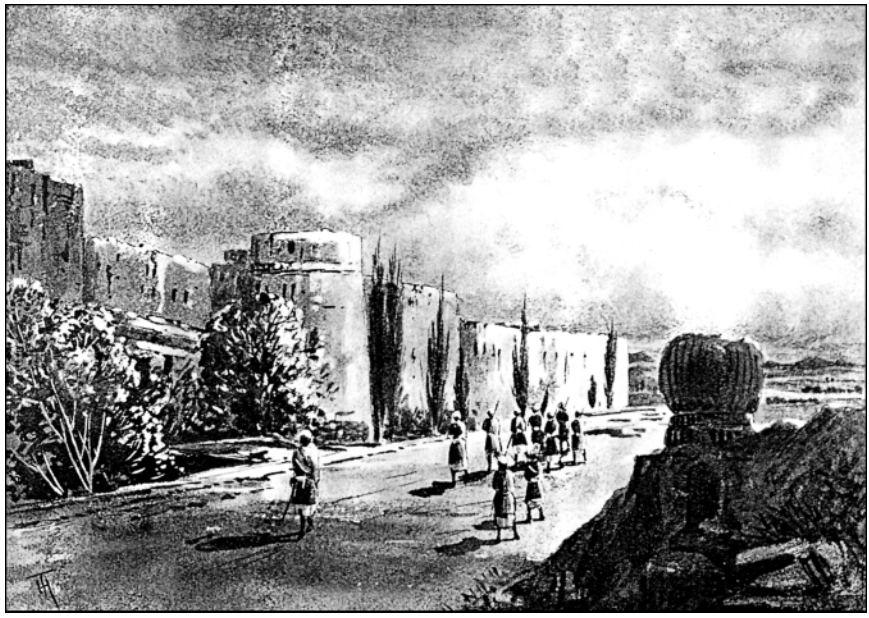
father-in-law, as the new governor of Herat. He immediately assumed the title 'Shah' of Herat as was customary of Herati leadership within Iranian Shahanshahi system at the time. He made coins and *khotbeh* in the name of Naser ad-Din Shah Qajar, 'Shahanshah' of Iran.[80]

The Iranians, on the other hand, suspected that Dust Mohammad Khan must have taken Qandehar with the help of the British and at their instigation, and that he intended to take Herat as well.[81] In their correspondence with the Iranians and the intermediatories, the British Indians denied having anything to do either with Dust Mohammad khan's annexation of Qandehar or with his designs on Herat. Nevertheless, the correspondence between British diplomats and military officials and British government personnel that have survived suggest otherwise. In a dispatch to London, Sir Justin Sheil expresses delight that Dust Mohammad Khan had occupied Qandehar. He asserts: 'Candehar has escaped from the control of Persia, and should be preserved from again falling under it'.[82] Furthermore, when Mohammad-Sadeq Khan, son of Dust Mohammad Khan took Farah, a dependence of Herat,[83] not only did not the British protest against the move but they were thinking of paving the way for the success of Dust Mohammad Khan's designs on Herat. In a dispatch to the Chief Commissioner for the Punjab, Lieutenant-Colonel Edwards suggested that Nayeb Isa Khan in Herat should keep that principality as a dependence of the Amir of Kabul[84] in the same way that it was a dependent of Iran.

All these contradicted the obligations suggested in the British government's contracted engagements with Iran, relative to Herat in a number of agreements, specially that of January 1853, whereby they accepted to 'prevent, by friendly means, foreign powers, such as the Afghans, or others' from 'interfere, and take possession of the Herat territory, or its dependencies'.[85] Interestingly, clause 3 of the testimonies of the envoys of Essan Khan (Nayeb Isa Khan), so cherished by the British, points out 'Afghanistan', alongside Iran, Khiveh and Bokhara, as the enemy of Herat.[86]

Seemingly encouraged by testimonies of the envoys of Nayeb Isa Khan, Britain declared war on Iran on 1st November 1856.[87] British forces, commanded by General Outram, occupied a number of Iranian ports and islands in the Persian Gulf and informed the Iranians of their conditions for peace. Their conditions covered mainly withdrawal, on the part of Iran, not only of all military forces from Herat and dependencies but also of all claims to Herat and what was then termed as the 'countries of Afghanistan'. The Russians, suspected of mobilizing to support Iran, were pacified. In a letter to Lord Woodehouse, the Earl of Clarendon expresses satisfaction that Britain's principal conditions were considered reasonable by the Russian government.[88]

Though the Russians proved in practice that they had no desire to team up with Iran and use Iranian territories to attack India, Russophobia intensified among the British in India and drove them to create the buffer



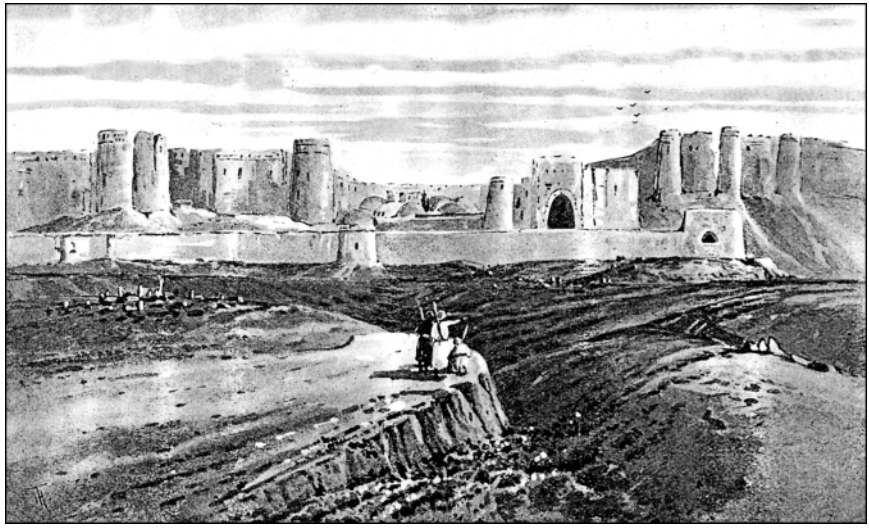


Plate 4.1 Two views of the walls around the city of Herat in the nineteenth century.
Source: Holdich, Colonel Sir T. Hangerford, *The Indian Borderland 1880–1900*, London 1901, pp. 140–1.

state of Afghanistan by dismembering the eastern dependencies of the Iranian federal system. They began openly disregarding Iran's legal position and her legitimate interests in Herat by claiming that the action in Herat was a display of an intention of threat against Qandehar and other areas occupied by Amir Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul. Not only did the British raise no objections to Dust Mohammad Khan's occupation of Qandehar and Farah, as was promised in the 1853 engagements, but East India Company signed an agreement with him on 6th January 1857 whereby the British allied themselves with him and undertook to pay him monthly as long as the latter kept the Iranians busy in war.[89]

Amir Dust Mohammad Khan signed this agreement with the British against Iran, in direct contravention of the fact attested by himself in a letter to the Shah of Iran[90] that, not only Herat and Qandehar, but also his own principality of Kabul had been dependencies of Iran.[91] British forces, however, occupied the Iranian island of Khark in the Persian Gulf on 4th December 1856; British Indian troops disembarked at Bandar Abbas on 9th December; the Iranians were dislodged from Bushehr on 27th January 1857; General Outram landed at Bandar Abbas on 8th February 1857; Iranian forces were defeated at Borazjan on 26th March; and Khorramshahr (then Mohammareh) was occupied by the British forces.[92] This military expedition, once again made the Iranian government give up Herat, as Sadr-e Azam Nouri seems to have been aware of the superior importance of Iran's position in the Persian Gulf, compared with the dependencies in Afghan countries. At the same time, London seems to have 'looked on the Indian Government's expedition of the entire Iranian coasts and islands of the Persian Gulf with discomfort'.[93] This seems to have been the reason for the British to make overtures to Napoleon III of France, who had also been approached by the Iranians. French mediation, however, resulted in the conclusion of a treaty of 15 articles in Paris on 4th March 1857, whereby the Iranians once again submitted to the conditions laid down by the British. This treaty was signed by Farrokh Khan Amin al-Molk, Iran's ambassador extraordinary to Paris and R. H. H. R. C. Baron Cowley, British ambassador extraordinary to Paris. From Paris, Amin al-Molk proceeded to London where he was received by Queen Victoria.

Article 5 of the Paris treaty of 1857 deals with the withdrawal of Iranian forces from Herat and the adjacent districts.[94] Article 6 compels Iran to relinquish all her rights and claims in connection with Herat and the 'countries of Afghanistan'. Furthermore, the Iranian government undertook other concessions, including recognition of Herat's independence and never to attack or interfere with independence of the state of Herat and other principalities of Afghanistan. This treaty was ratified at Baghdad on 2nd May 1857.

As the eastern Iranian frontiers shifted, therefore, to the territories west of Herat, Ghurian, and Farah, and as boundary delimitation was next on the agenda of British India's political designs, article 6 of the 1857 treaty of Paris provided also for the British to be party to such boundary arrangements

Plate 4.2 Farrokh Khan Amin al-Molk (later Amin ad-Doleh) as he appeared in the *Illustrated London News*, 14th February 1857.

between Iran and Afghanistan. Paragraph 3 of article 6 of this treaty makes it clear that;

> In case of differences arising between the Government of Persia and the countries of Herat and Afghanistan, the Persian Government engages to refer them for adjustment to the friendly offices of the British Government and not to take up arms unless those friendly offices fail of effect.[95]

A similar treaty with Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul in the same year gave the British the same right of mediation in Afghan boundary disputes with Iran. In Herat, despite the developments leading to it's separation from Iran, Sardar Sultan Ahmad Shah, appointed by Iran as governor a year earlier,[96] not

only continued in this capacity until 1863 but also remained loyal to Iran for six years, in spite of the clear terms of first paragraph of article 6 of Paris treaty of 1857 which engaged Iran not to 'demand from the Chief of Herat, or of the countries of Afghanistan, any marks of obedience, such as the coinage or "*Khootbeh*", or tribute'.[97] That is to say, while signing the Paris treaty of 1857, Sadr Azam Nouri effectiveley kept Heart for Iran as well as putting an end to British occupation of the Perisan Gulf.

There is no evidence suggesting that Iran asked Herat to remain loyal to the central government at Tehran or to pay annual tribute. Having promised to Sadr Azam Nouri at the time of his appointment as Governor of Herat, Sardar Sultan Ahmad Shah (father-in-law of Amir Shokat al-Molk I Khozeimeh) continued his loyalty to Iran after the signing of the 1857 peace treaty of Paris which effectively declared Herat independent of both Iran and Afghanistan. This was not what Amir Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul desired, and the British found it difficult to understand how a vassal state, severed from the Persian federation, opted to return to the tradition of being a member of that federation.

Having established himself firmly in Qandehar and having seized Herat's southern dependency of Farah, Dust Mohammad Khan ordered Sardar Mohammad Sharif, his governor of Farah, to march his troops northwards. Herat's dependencies of Ghurian and Sagher were seized in 1860. Sardar Soltan Ahmad Shah, for his part, moved troops southward and recaptured Farah in 1861. This move gave Dust Mohammad Khan a much-needed excuse for taking action against Herat itself. On 28th June 1862, intelligence was received in Tehran that Amir Dust Mohammad Khan had reached Qandehar, with the aim of marching on Herat. The Iranian government informed the British minister in Tehran that Sardar Amin Khan and Sardar Sharif Khan had invested Farah on behalf of Dust Mohammad Khan and asked for British intervention. This was in accordance with the last paragraph of the 1857 Paris peace treaty, which requires that the British government; 'when appealed to by the Persian Government, in the event of difficulties arising [with the state of Afghanistan], will use their best endeavours to compose such difference in a manner just and honourable to Persia'.[98] The British, nevertheless, remained inactive and Farah fell on 28th July that year. Dust Mohammad Khan marched on Herat. He took Sabzevar (now in Afghanistan) on 22nd July[99] and put Herat under siege immediately. The seige lasted for several months.[100]

During the siege of Herat, Soltan Ahmad Shah's wife, Amir Dust Mohammad Khan's daughter, died (January 1863). Shortly after her death, the two sides had to stop hostility as Soltan Ahmad Shah himself passed away (April 1863). The defence of the city was continued by Soltan Ahmad Shah's son, Sardar Shahnavaz Khan, also Dust Mohammad Khan's grandson. The grandson's resistance against the grandfather's tightening siege proved ineffective, and Dust Mohammad Khan entered Herat shortly afterwards.

The Iranian government appealed to the British government to assist Sardar Shahnavaz Khan by lifting the siege of Herat. Mr Eastwick was

assigned by the British legation at Tehran to see to the matter. He was made Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Herat, but returned to Tehran empty-handed. Thus, Dust Mohammad Khan occupied Herat and fulfilled the British design of creating the kingdom of Afghanistan. His joy was but short-lived, and he died on 19th June 1863,[101] a few months after the death of his daughter and son-in-law and only a week or two after capturing Herat.

In conclusion, it must be said that the political and military paralysis of the Iranian government, resulting from the terms of the 1857 peace treaty, allowed the finalization of the partitioning of Khorasan and paved the way for the creation of Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Dorrani[102] had in the second half of the eighteenth century created the kingdom of Afghanistan, but it collapsed with his death in 1772, for it did not have the necessary geographical, historical and cultural substance necessary for nation-building and to hold Herat and Qandehar together with Kabul in a lasting union. Herat, for instance was more of a Khorasani environment than anything else and, as Lord Curzon asserted, it was geographical, historical and cultural extension of Mashhad rather than being Afghan.

Dust Mohammad Khan succeeded in the second half of the nineteenth century in reviving the Afghan kingdom with the direct and indirect assistance of the British in India whenever necessary. This assistance was given because it served British geo-strategic designs of wanting to create a buffer state between India and Russia. It had nothing to do with British excuses that Iran had territorial designs against the countries of Afghanistan. Afghanistan was thus created to suit the geo-strategic needs of British India; that is to say it was created in response to the clamouring that had intensified throughout British empire in the 1830s through to 1850s of a possible joint Russo-Iranian design against India was only to serve the enthusiastic geopolitical and geo-strategic assumptions of Sir John McNeil, Sir Justin Sheil and other political strategists of British India.

Sir John McNeil's fantastic assessments of geo-strategic position of Herat *vis-à-vis* the on-going Russophobia was adopted by the British in India, whereas London appears to have remained somewhat uneasy on the question of depriving Iran completely of her rights in Herat, as a British Foreign Office document states: 'Persia's claims to Herat were of long standing. It had been the capital of Eastern Khorasan and geographically was not separated by any natural barrier from Mashhad'.[103]

This is an echo of the statement made earlier by Lord Curzon on the fact that Herat had been a historical part of Iran's Eastern Khorasan.[104] Yet, convinced of the vitality of Sir John McNeil's geo-strategic assumption, Lord Curzon, like most other officers and diplomats serving in India, was critical of the London government's repeated proposals on returning Herat to Iran. He stated that: 'Lord Beconsfield after the war of 1878 committed the inexplicable error of proposing once again to hand over Herat ... "Key of India" to Persia to the tender mercies of the Czar'.[105]

5

THE PARTITIONING OF KHORASAN AND BALUCHISTAN AND THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN BOUNDARIES

Introduction

Herat's occupation in 1863 by Amir Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul, which finalized the partitioning of Greater Khorasan, was discussed in the previous chapter. Afghan encroachment into Iranian territories did not, however, stop at Herat's occupation by Dust Mohammad Khan with the help of the British. These encroachments continued in the form of direct military operations and tribal raids. Amir Dust Mohammad Khan was succeeded in 1863 by his son, Amir Shir-Ali Khan who almost immediately after acceding to power, resumed expansionist activities in the territories well beyond the western districts of Herat and Qandehar, particularly in Sistan district.

Meanwhile, returning from their Afghan expedition the British forces captured Sind and Punjab in the two battles of Mianeh (1843) and Gujerat (1848). Annexation of these two countries pushed British India's frontiers westward to a line reaching from Pishavar in the north to Karachi in the south. A considerable segment of the state of Baluchistan thus came under the sovereignty of British India. By late 1860s British India began to implement a project of telegraph lines between India and Great Britain which was to pass through Iran's southern Baluchistan (Makran) and the Persian Gulf. These two developments necessitated the establishment of clearly defined boundaries of a European nature between Iran and India in the Baluchistan area, and between Iran and Afghanistan in Khorasan and Sistan provinces.

Of these sections, delimitation of Sistan boundaries (the middle section) took the longest time as it involved great complications including the issue of the Hirmand River. Hence the study of the emergence of the middle section of these boundaries will be the subject of the following chapter.

This chapter, however, will also deal with the emergence of Khorasan and Baluchistan boundaries, as this will aid a better understanding of the way territorial games were conducted in the region by the big and small players of the Great Game. This chapter will therefore fall into two distinct parts:

first section examines evolution of the northern (Khorasan) section and the second deals with the emergence of the southern (Baluchistan) section.

The Khorasan boundaries

Herat's legal secession from Iran in 1857 and its actual occupation in 1863 by Dust Mohammad Khan of Kabul finalized the British colonial strategy of partitioning of Khorasan. The frontier between what were left of Khorasan and the newly established kingdom of Afghanistan was put on Ghurian and Farah to the west of Herat. This line of boundary is 337 miles in length, in addition to the length of Hari-rud, which forms the northernmost part of the borderline between Iran and Afghanistan.

Though Herat was captured by the founder of the Barakzaei dynasty of the newly formed kingdom of Afghanistan, the frontiers between Herat (Afghani Khorasan) and Iranian Khorasan remained undefined. It was only natural that complications resulting from the partitioning of Greater Khorasan would cause disputes and affrays between the two countries and among local holders of title to the lands therein. These disputes intensified to the extent that defining a clear boundary line in the central areas of Greater Khorasan became a necessity.

Not only did Shir-Ali Khan do nothing to allay Iran's suspicions of his designs against Iranian territories, but he also initiated military operations in the vicinity of Sistan, which only aggravated Iran's anxieties. The Iranian government informed the British minister in Tehran in December 1878 that the Amir of Afghanistan had assembled 20 regiments of foot soldier and cavalry with 50 guns at Herat with the intention of attacking Sistan.[1] Moreover, the Iranian government enquired whether British intervention under clause 6 of 1857 Paris treaty could be counted on. While referring this enquiry to the government in London, the Governor-General of India claimed that Calcutta was not aware of any ill intention against Iranian territories on the part of the Afghan Amir.[2] In spite of British Indian officials' apparent lack of interest in Iran's anxieties and in its grievances over the conduct of Amir Shir-Ali Khan, political affray and local raids intensified in the border areas of Qaenat and Hashtadan districts and became so serious that they necessitated boundary delimitation between the two countries.

Hashtadan arbitration and MacLean's line

The Hashtadan Plain forms the eastern and greater portion of a tract, the northwestern point of which forms part of the Iranian district of Bakharz. Karat, Farzaneh, Raona, and Garna were, at the time of 1880's arbitration, included in the subdivision known as 'Parin Velayat' or Lower Bakharz.[3] The Hashtadan Valley, according to General MacLean's memorandum of July 1891,[4] was bounded to the north by the Senjedi hills, which the Afghans call

Kuh-e Darband, to the south by Kuh-e Gedayaneh, to the east by the Sang-e Dokhtar and Yal-e Khar ranges, and to the west by the watershed between Hashtadan *qanats* and the streams flowing into Iranian territory.

The valley is about 24 miles in length, and at its widest, from the Dahaneh-e Shurab to the crest of the Kuh-e Gedayaneh, is about 16 miles. The valley consists of three distinct regions:[5]

1 The Shurab basin, around the head of which lie the traces of former habitation and cultivation.
2 A belt of level steppes which surrounds the Shurab basin on three sides, and has no visible signs of surface drainage.
3 An outer slope at the foot of the hills and drainage which is, for the most part, lost in the steppe, and does not appear to reach the Shurab except that from the Sanjideh and perhaps some from the Sang-e Dokhtar during heavy rain.

The Shurab has six principal tributaries, which unite before leaving the valley by the Dahaneh-e Shurab. Thence it takes the name Qal'eh Kala, which to the point of junction with Hari-rud near Tuman Agha, forms what was then the acknowledged border between Iran and Afghanistan. There are ruins of several villages on Hashtadan Plain, which have been deserted for generations. There were also the remains of 39 *qanats*, at the time of arbitration, in the valley, all of which were out of repair and dry. The number of Hashtadan's *qanats* in the older times was said to have been eighty (*hashtad*) and this is where the name Hashtadan comes from. The Governor-General of Khorasan undertook in April 1885 to clear out and repair some of these *qanats*. The work was interrupted by the Afghans, who destroyed the plants and tools of the Iranian labourers.[6] This incident brought the two governments into direct dispute over the district. Both Iran and Afghanistan approached the government of British India requesting their intervention.

The government of British India decided in 1886 to appoint Brigadier-General C. S, MacLean, the Consul-General at Mashhad, to arbitrate between Iran and Afghanistan in the Hashtadan dispute. The investigation work was delayed for various reasons. By late April 1888 General MacLean began his work in Hashtadan district. Iran was represented in the arbitration commission by Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan Nezam al-Molk, the Kargozar of Khorasan, and his team included his son, Mirza Jahangir Khan, and General Mirza Mohammad-Ali Khan as professional advisers.[7] Afghanistan was represented by General Qotb ad-Din accompanied by a number of lawyers and tribal chiefs from Herat; one member of the group was Mirza Mohammad-Omar, designated by the Amir of Afghanistan to keep a check on the Afghan commissioner.[8]

Before leaving for Hashtadan, MacLean asked the representatives of both countries to submit to him their written claims. In their initial claims the

Afghans wished to restrict the investigation to the lands of Kolukh, Pardeh and Hashtadan.[9] But as the arbitration commission met on 30th April 1888, and the Iranian representative claimed the whole of Hashtadan Valley and lands up to Sang-e Dokhtar, the Afghans changed their mind instantly and claimed Farzaneh, Garmab and places situated well within Iran's undisputed territory.[10] Apart from this, the greatest handicap for the investigation was that Hashtadan was virtually uninhabited at the time of arbitration. The testimonies of the inhabitants of a disputed territory normally are the best indication of ownership. The Hashtadan population, according to MacLean's first memorandum, had left the plain more than a century before the arbitration investigation began, probably because of an epidemic throat disease.[11]

In the absence of local testimonials, the arbitrator had to consider how to determine the history of the former population's allegiance to either of the two governments. The arbitration also had to rely on the evidence provided by the two sides. Representatives of Iran and Afghanistan supplied MacLean with their written claims supported by 11 and 10 documents of proof respectively. In his memorandum of 14th December 1889, MacLean provides a summary of Iran's 11 documents. At the end of each one he registered his evaluation of the documents, rejecting almost all of them. When it came to the 10 documents supplied by the Afghan side, he enclosed all of them in their original form without registering an opinion of his own on their validity.[12]

As neither party were forthcoming in a compromise for the settlement of the dispute, the Viceroy of India wrote to the Amir of Afghanistan asking him to advise his representative to give up unjustifiable claims on places within Iranian possession and to accept the limits defined by MacLean.[13] As for the Iranians, General MacLean found an opportunity to meet Naser ad-Din Shah (1848–1896) during the latter's visit of July 1889 to Britain. It was in this meeting that MacLean must have concluded that the imperial court in Tehran was too ignorant of the lands in dispute to be aware of its importance for Iran. At the conclusion of this meeting, the Shah decided that though 'the Afghans were nothing' he would give them the whole of Hashtadan with all its *qanats*, other water resources, agricultural lands and whatever of the population therein, only 'because the feeling of friendship' he 'entertained towards the English government.[14] As a result of this incomprehensible generosity the whole of Hashtadan was given to the Afghans, save for the barren hills of the same name situated on the western extreme of Hashtadan Plain. Furthermore, in order to keep his own nation oblivious of this generosity, the Qajar Shah requested that the new maps should have the word 'Hashtadan' marked on the Iranian side of the borderline. Informing the Viceroy of India of this turn of events, the British minister in Tehran asserted that MacLean deserved 'very great credit' for this achievement.[15]

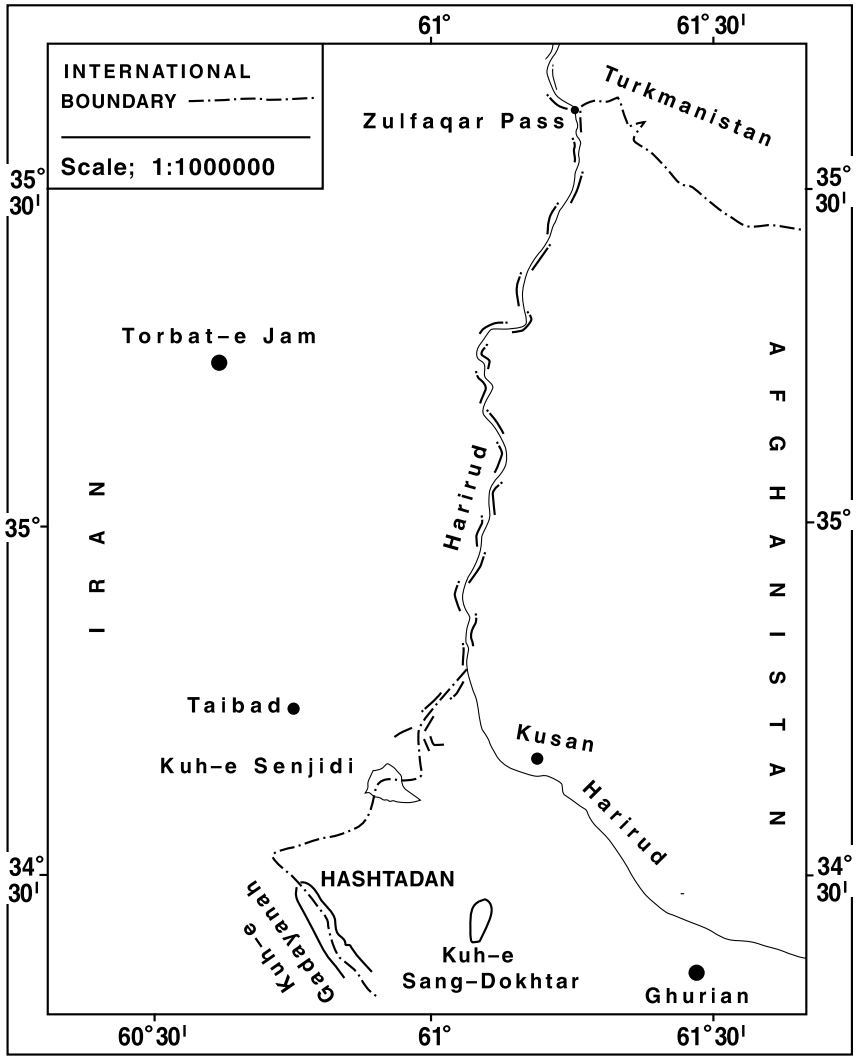
This development, however, enabled MacLean to delimit 103 miles of Khorasan boundaries between Iran and Afghanistan. He surveyed and delineated the boundaries from Hashtadan Plain, some 60 miles to the west of the city of Herat, to the Zolfaghar Pass where Iran–Pakistan–Afghanistan frontiers meet. The MacLean Line consists of 39 turning-points, which leaves the entire plain on the Afghan side, with the Hashtadan hills on the Iranian side. In his memorandum of 6th July 1891 MacLean describes this line of boundary as follows:

> The line commences at the northern point of the Kuh-I-Kadanna passes round the heads of the southern group of Kanat (*qanat*) immediately north of the Hashtadan mound. It then passes round the Hashtadan mound, leaving the mound on the Persian side of the line. Thence across to the foot of the Hill, and thence due north to the crest of the Sanjitti range. The line then follows the crest of the range eastward to the crest of the Hills on the northern side of the Dahana-I-Shorab, and thence in a straight line to a point on the left bank of the Kali-I-Kala 300 yards below the place where the old canal takes off towards Kafir Kala. The line then follows the Kali-I-Kala up to the Hari-rud.[16]

The proposed settlement of the Hashtadan boundary dispute was reported to the governments of Iran and Afghanistan through the Viceroy of India in 1890. In his letter of 29th September 1890 to the Afghan Amir, the Viceroy urged him to accept the proposed settlement. A favourable response to this resulted in General MacLean's immediate assignment to carrying out the demarcation of the Hashtadan boundaries. He concluded this task in July 1891 and submitted a copy of the synopsis together with its map of the line to the Indian government. The Viceroy submitted a copy of MacLean's report to the Amir of Afghanistan who accepted it with much delight.

International reaction to Naser ad-Din Shah's incomprehensible generosity in giving the Hashtadan Plain to Afghanistan out of his 'friendly feelings towards the British government' amounted to no less than a disgrace to the political leadership of Iran. The Russians, for instance, claimed that, as Iranian territories were effectively up for grabs, Hashtadan should be given to them. In a message to Iranian Prime Minister Amin as-Sultan, the Russian chargé d'affaires stated that in view of the circumstances, Hashtadan was virtually given to the British. Similarly, the French demanded that the Iranian island of Khark be given to them.[17]

What had happened in Hashtadan was indeed no less than simply giving up Iranian territories in favour of the Afghans. Not only were the Russians and the French aware of this scandalous undertaking by Naser ad-Din Shah in connection with the British, but also in his own memorandum of 14th December 1889, General MacLean states openly:



Map 5.1 Hashtadan and Hari-rud boundaries (MacLean's Line).

It will be noticed that the Afghans bring forward no proof of their having actually occupied Hashtadan either before or after Ahmad Shah's time. The leaves of the Herat revenue record they allude to have no date, and, therefore, even if genuine, give no indication of the period during which Kulukh, Pardai paid revenue to Herat.[18]

Qaenat arbitration and Altay's line

General MacLean's arbitration of 103 miles of Khorasan boundaries left the remaining 234 miles of Iran–Afghanistan boundaries in Qaenat district of Khorasan undefined. This length of border areas began from Musa-Abad hamlet, southeast of MacLean's pillar no. 39, running through the salt lake 'Namakzar', to east of Qaenat, and ended in the start of McMahon's line of 1905 at Kuh-e Malek Siah, which is the beginning of Sistan boundary. A number of areas in this stretch of frontier were in dispute between Iran and Afghanistan. Moreover, the long-lasting raids on Iranian settlements by Afghan elements increased noticeably. Writing in 1857, General Ferrier asserts:

> It is only five or six years since Kerim-dad Khan (Chief of Hazarah tribes) followed the (noble) profession of pillage: he plundered caravans, and extended his forays to the south of Iran in the district of Qaen, where he sacked the villages and carried off the people to sell them to the Uzbeks. His depredations were so frequent, and gave rise to so many complaints, that Assef Doulet sent to Yar Mohammad Khan and informed him that, as he seemed unable to keep his own vassal in order, he should chastise himself as the head of an army.[19]

Reports and confidential diaries of the British consulates at Mashhad, Birjand and Sistan contain a large number of instances of Afghan raids on the towns and villages of Khorasan, Qaenat and Sistan, which increased in their frequency from the beginning of the twentieth century.[20] These cross-border raids came to a head in late 1934 when Afghan tribesmen who had previously entered Iran decided to return to Afghanistan, causing considerable damage to lives and properties in the border area of Zurabad, apparently at the instigation of local Afghan officials. Reuters, reporting from Tehran, described the incident as follows:

> Tehran, 16th December 1934; a party of Afghans consisting of prominent persons and military officers entered Persian territory via Zorabad, plundered 25 villages, murdered 3 road guard and took away 2,000 Persians as prisoners with a large quantity of arms. The loss following on this incident is estimated at £50,000 sterling. Because of this incident the Persian press is bitterly attacking the Afghan Government.[21]

This report, although proved to be exaggerated in the case of the 2000 people being taken prisoner (this was thought, in fact, to have been the number of tribesmen crossing the border), caused uproar in Iran. Iranian

authorities formally protested to the Afghans who, in return, invited Iranian representatives to jointly inspect the site of the incident[22] in order to establish validity of the report. The press in Afghanistan, in the meantime, denied the whole thing and the Afghan ambassador in Tehran carried out a smear campaign among foreign diplomats against Iran as a nation.[23] The joint commission eventually concluded that the Zurabad incident took place without the knowledge of the Afghan government but had been provoked by Afghan tribal leaders and a number of other Afghan subjects. The Afghan government subsequently undertook to punish the offenders and to compensate for the losses incurred and return the stolen goods[24] notwithstanding the terms of this joint communiqué, which implies that neither the Afghan government nor any Afghan government official had been directly or indirectly involved in this incident. Yet British observers in the region were aware that:

> For a long time it has been the policy of the Naib Salar of Herat to locate the toughest elements in the province on the frontier. These consist of well-armed tribes of nomads who with their flocks and camels are not confined to any one area and at the same time are in a position to raid with impunity in any direction having no immovable which can be threatened.[25]

Apart from these cross-border incidents the Afghans began a series of claims against Iran's territorial possessions from 1931, and began interfering with the existing border arrangements. In a telegram to the government of India, for instance, the British Consul-General at Mashhad reports: *'a boundary pillar on Bakharz frontier, recently removed by Afghans, has been replaced by Persian troops. Both sides have increased the frontier posts and relations are strained'*.[26]

In addition to these activities, the Afghan authorities claimed the village of Musa Abad, southwest of pillar 39 of the MacLean Line, arguing that Musa Abad had been given to Afghanistan by the MacLean boundary award of 1891. In 1903 a party of Afghan soldiers visited Musa Abad,[27] in direct contravention of MacLean's award. That award had invited both Iran and Afghanistan to observe a status quo in the tract to the south of pillar 39 of Hashtadan boundary. This Afghan act violated the fact that Musa Abad was the property of Mohammad Sadeq, an Iranian subject who was at the time deputy governor of the Iranian district of Bakharz.

A report prepared for the government of India in May 1904 by Captain C. B. Winter, consul at Torbat Heydariyeh, identifies many instances of Afghan encroachments at Musa Abad.[28] Forwarding this report to the government of India, the British-Consul General in Khorasan concluded that according to paragraph 12 of General MacLean's report and boundary pillar No. 39 Musa Abad would certainly appear to belong to Persia'.[29] The Iranian Kargozar of Torbat Heydariyeh reported to Tehran in 1904, for instance, that:

> an Afghan official has visited Khushabeh from Ghurian, and has told the people that Khushabeh belonged to the Afghans. The report ads that an Afghan official from Ghurian visited Musa Abad, Khushabeh and Kuh-e Sang-e Dokhtar twice a week; and if he sow Iranian flocks grazing there, prevented them from grazing.[30]

In his despatch of 28th September 1904 to the British government reporting on his meeting with Iranian Prime Minister Moshir ad-Doleh, the British minister in Tehran indicated that he informed the latter of British India's representation at Kabul. He also added that the Iranian premier had told him that the Afghans encroached not merely at Musa Abad, but also at a place in its vicinity named Ayubi.[31]

In September 1932 the Afghan government asked the British at Kabul whether the government of India could give them any information and documentary evidence[32] proving that Musa Abad was given to Afghanistan by MacLean's Hashtadan awards. The two neighbours had, by this time, started talks on these boundaries and related issues. The Afghan government had asked once again if the British government:

> ... could supply them with documentary evidence supporting their claims, whilst they had in their possession copies of General MacLean's award in which the demarcated boundaries are described as starting from the northern points of the Koh-I Kadana (Kuh-e Gedayaneh), passes round the heads of the southern group of kanats.[33]

This description of the southern end of the MacLean Line, clearly leaving out Musa Abad to the southwest of Kuh-e Gedayaneh and pillar 39 which is the last pillar of the line, south of Hashtadan Plain. Furthermore, the Afghan government put the above request to the government of British India knowing that they had in 1897 asked the Viceroy of India the same question. In his letter to the British the Afghan Amir even insinuated that the British and Iranians had, one way or another, considered Musa Abad as an Afghan possession.[34] In his reply to this, the Viceroy of India denied that MacLean's award had given Musa Abad to the Afghans and asked the Afghan amir to prevent his officers from taking any steps which might lead the Persians to press their claims and perhaps disturb the peace of the frontier.[35]

A second question in September 1932 of the same nature had a similar reply from the British India authorities. This time the government of India referred to another similar question put to the British by the Afghans in 1903. On that occasion, Lord Curzon had made it clear to the Afghans that Musa Abad did not belong to them.[36] The Afghans nevertheless continued claiming not only Musa Abad, but also the district of Yazdan, further south to Musa Abad, the Namakzar (salt lake) and Chekab, all located within Iranian possession.

The arbitration process

As the dispute intensified, both governments agreed on 8th March 1934, under article 10 of Iran–Afghanistan treaty of 1921, to go to arbitration. This time the Turks were asked to arbitrate. The Turkish government agreed in the same month to arbitrate and assigned General Fakhr ed-Din Altay to lead the arbitration team. It was arranged that the two sides would submit their written claims to the arbitration commission through the Turkish government before October that year. The commission was given an audience by Reza Shah Pahlavi at Amol of Mazandaran in October 1934 and then visited the area in dispute for a preliminary survey and proceeded from there to Kabul on 12th November 1934. The commission returned to the frontier, for further investigations on 22nd November that year.[37]

Among General Altay's arbitration team was one Colonel Zia Bey, who the British diplomats at Kabul recognized as having been an old friend of Senior Afghan officers.[38]

The Iranians, in the meantime, began noticeable military movements in the eastern areas of the country, dispatching troops to the frontier in the neighbourhood of Torbat-e Jam and Khaf.[39] The movement of troops, although not directly attributed to the border considerations, presented clear indications of Iran's determination that unlike the past experiences, this time the matter of boundary disputes would be treated seriously.[40]

Tehran appointed Mr (later Senator) Mehdi Farrokh (Mo'tasam as-Saltaneh) as Iran's commissioner, aided by a group of 20 experts[41] and Kabul assigned the governor of Herat, Abd ar-Rahim Khan Nayeb Salar to lead the Afghan delegation to the boundary arbitration commission.

The commission spent three weeks at Mashhad and returned to Ghurian on 29th December 1934 for further local investigation, only to meet again with the representatives of Iran and Afghanistan on 18th January 1935 for the final study and exchange of documents related to the two sides' claims. From Ghurian, the arbitration commission proceeded to inspect the frontier from the Afghan side, because it was impossible to do so – for reasons not stated – from the Iranian side. This arrangement was hailed with delight by the Afghan delegation.

The commission inspected the disputed border areas as far south as Siah Kuh and on 17th January returned to Herat. The Iranian delegation, who had not been with the commission during the proceedings, also arrived in Herat on the same day. The next day General Altay addressed both delegations at a joint sitting and a brief deliberation followed[42]. Disturbances ensued around Namakzar area a few days after Turkish arbitrator left for his country. Apprehensive of another border arbitration going against them, Tehran asked Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh III of Qaenat to compile documentary evidence in support of the Iranian claims,[43] but the renewed conflicts caused delay in deliberation of boundary arbitration by the Turks.

A British diplomat, reporting to his government from Turkey, stated that the Turkish government had 'decided to withdraw their mission unless Persian and Afghan governments both express simultaneously in advance and abide by an award which Turkish mission would make without further discussion'.[44]

These assurances were given to the Turks by both sides and the Turkish government finally delivered on 15th May 1935 to the Iranian and Afghan Ambassadors at Ankara Altay's arbitral awards,[45] which was written in Turkish. On 6th October 1935 the Iranian Majlis passed the bill prepared on the basis of this award,[46] and a joint Iranian-Afghan demarcation commission was formed immediately to erect the boundary posts.

The award included the following major points:[47]

1 *Musa Abad* was a hamlet at the time of arbitration with a freshwater spring. The Afghan guards had occupied the largest of the three houses there and another Afghan occupied the other two. The *qanat* from which Musa Abad received its water had been constructed by Khozeimeh Amir Mohammad Reza Khan Samsam ad-Doleh on behalf of the Khozeimeh family.[48] General Altay began his line by sharply turning to the west so that he could give half of Musa Abad district to the Afghans. This was done in contravention of the fact that Musa Abad was the personal property of an Iranian subject and that it is situated tens of miles to the west of MacLean's border mark 39 (see section 1 Map 5.2).
2 From Musa Abad to the north of *Namakzar*, General Altay put his border marks 40 to 51. From this point the boundary line follows Rud-e Sargardan riverbed for about 10 kilometres (approx. 6.2 miles) until it reaches the point where the new channel of the river branches out from the old channel. Border mark 52 was put there. From this point on the borderline follows the old channel of the Rud for a further 10 kilometres (northwest to southwest), leaving the Afghan Siah Kuh to the Afghans and the Iranian Siah Kuh to Iran. This line continues to the northern costs of Namakzar where border mark 53 is put.[49] General Altay continued his line southward, dividing the Namakzar into two. He gave the eastern half of the lake to Afghanistan and its western half to Iran (see section 2 of Map 5.2) solely because a document was produced that expressed an individual Iranian consent to the use of the salt of the lake by the Afghans.
3 *Yazdan*, at the time of arbitration, was a small village of a few inhabitants with an agricultural field, a gendarmerie and a custom office, all belonging to Iran.[50] The village and lands also belonged to the Khozeimeh Amir Mohammad Reza Khan and Amir Hussein Khan. Twelve kilometres to the south of Yazdan is situated the small village of Kabudeh with a few inhabitants with agricultural lands and *qanats*, all of which were owned by Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam. The

Khozeimeh Amir had also constructed a new qanat, which he had named Taher Abad, after his daughter Tahereh.

Between Yazdan and Kabudeh was situated the Nazar Khan field which belonged to an Afghan subject.[51] The arbitration was done on the basis of existing possession and thus it was decided to give Iran the villages of Yazdan and Kabudeh, and to give Afghanistan the Nazar Khan field (see section 3 in Map 5.2).

4 *Chekab*, the borderline from Kabudeh follows as far as Kuh-e Rigu where border mark 72 was placed. Thence the line turns and follows a gentle line from northwest to southeast as far as Kuh-e Kharmagah, where border mark 80 was placed. In his award Altay named this mountain after himself and refers to it as Kuh-e Altay. To the south of this point Altay did not take into consideration Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Khozeimeh Shokat al-Molk II Alam's ownership of a hamlet.[52] He referred to this locality as of unknown ownership and/ thus gave it to the Afghans so that the straight line of the boundary would not have to be modified[53] (see section 4 in Map 5.2).

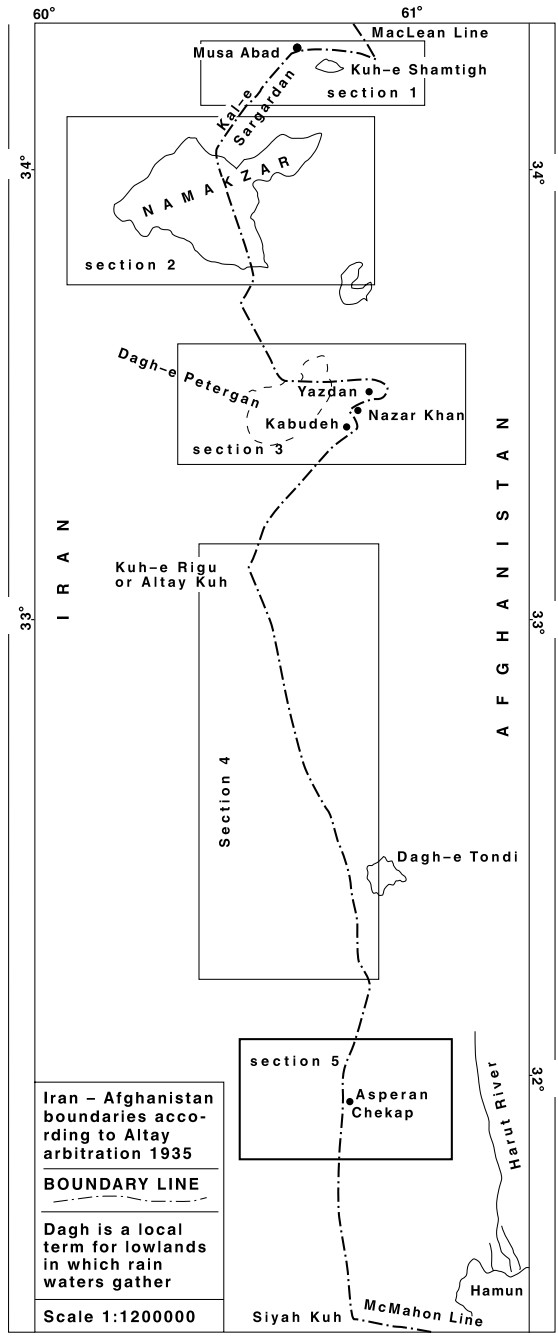
Altay even does not name this locality in his award. The place was in fact a hamlet with few inhabitants and a number of agricultural lands named Chekab. Interviewed by this author on 5th January 1992, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam stated:

> Chekab was owned by my father's uncle and my father-in-law Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk, who was the Amir of Qaenat and Sistan at the time. Though his ownership of the hamlet and its field and springs were established, the arbitration decided to give them to Afghanistan solely on the basis of the testimony given by Amir Shokat al-Molk's former *mobasher* (local representative or adviser) who was an Afghan and hoped to own them if given to Afghanistan. But Amir Shokat al-Molk continued ownership of the locality for some years afterwards.

Monsef is the only source that deals with this matter in more detail. In his book he asserts that Amir Shokat al-Molk's continued enforcement of cross-border ownership of Chekab eventually led to protest from the Afghan government. Reza Shah summoned the Amir as a result and after a lengthy discussion ordered him to give up Chekab if the Afghans purchased his interests.[54]

From Asperan the border line continued north to south as far as Siah Kuh, which is the beginning of McMahon's line of the Sistan boundary. Altay's final border mark (no. 87) is placed at the highest point of this mountain.[55]

Though ratified by their Majlis, the Iranians remained unhappy about the outcome of the arbitration process. They have enumerated a number of theories for Altay's awards favouring Afghanistan. One such theory concerns



Map 5.2 Namakzar and Qaenat boundaries (Altay's Line).

the fact that Altay inspected the frontier areas only from the Afghan side without the presence of the Iranian delegation, which could have been instrumental in his better appreciation of Afghan argument and claims. Another theory is that Colonel Zia Bey, Altay's assistant, through his friendship and constant contacts with the Afghan military officers led the arbitration to favour Afghan interests. In his letter of 20th November 1989 to this author, the late Abdol-Hussein Meftah, former locum Foreign Minister, touches on a different theory. He wrote:

> Once in Ankara I met Feiz-Mohammad Khan, Afghan Ambassador, who was Afghanistan's Foreign Minister at the time of Altay arbitration of 1935. He told me privately: I know that the arbitration was received in Iran with a stern face (both Reza Shah and Forooghi were angry), but whose fault was it? It was the fault of the Iranian Government for sending a mentally unbalanced person as head of their Commission. These words shocked me, and I kept staring at him in surprise. He continued: Mr. Meftah, don't be surprised; I will just tell you a little about his behaviour and leave it to your judgement. This man used to get up at each meeting, and while keeping his hands behind his back, walked up and down like a teacher in a classroom, spelled out French words and expressions, suffering from a superiority complex, in a manner that both General Altay and I, were totally nervous. When you send such an impolite and unbalanced person to such an important job, what do you expect?

This theory is quite popular among the older generation of Iranian diplomats, but others who served in the Iranian government and are more familiar with the overall view of Iran's relations with Afghanistan, dismiss it. Dr Ali-Naghi Alikhani, a former minister in the Iranian government told this author on 18th March 1991:

> . . . though there is no doubt about Farrokh's irrational behaviour, it is not easy to believe that a boundary arbitrator would base his decision of creating permanent frontiers between two countries on such petty considerations as disliking the behaviour of a colleague. If Altay's arbitration favoured Afghanistan, the reason must be sought elsewhere.

The late Mr. Meftah's letter, nevertheless, indicates that top Afghan officials admitted privately that Altay's arbitration award favoured Afghanistan at the expense of loss of territories to Iran.

The joint Iran–Afghanistan demarcation commission was however, set up immediately after the official announcement of Altay's award in May 1935. This commission completed the demarcation works along the whole of the 234 miles of the Altay Line by early 1936.

The partitioning of Baluchistan and Iran's frontiers with British India

Historical background

The Safavid Empire of Iran (1501–1731) succeeded in reviving the traditional political union of Iran approximately within the frontiers of the pre-Islamic Persian empires. Baluchistan district – from the River Hirmand to the coasts of the Indian Ocean, and from Indus to Kerman – was under Iranian sovereignty throughout the Safavid era. The rise to power of Nader Shah Afshar in the 1730s put an end to about ten years of confusion that had resulted from the Abdali rebellion of 1722 and guaranteed Baluchistan's return to Iranian sovereignty after a brief period of turmoil. When in 1730 (1143 AH) Nader Shah (then Nader Qoli), who was busy subduing a revolt in Herat at the outset of his career, sent Mohammad Momen Beik Marvi to Abdullah Khan, leader of Brahuei Baluch and governor of Baluchistan, for assistance. Abdullah Khan was preparing for this task when war broke out between him and the governor of Sind, during which conflict he was killed. His sons, Amir Mohabbat and Amir Eltiaz, wrote to Nader informing him of the incident. Nader Shah bestowed the governorship of Baluchistan upon Amir Mohabbat, the elder son of Abdullah Khan (1736). Having completed his Indian expedition, Nader Shah ordered the southwestern sections of the province of Sind to be included in the governorship of Baluchistan.[56]

During the period when Iran was leaderless following Nader Shah's assassination in 1747 Abdullah Khan's younger son, Nasser Khan seized power in Kalat, and accepted the suzerainty of Amir Alam Khan I, the Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat and Sistan who had by then expanded his dominion to include Baluchistan. Immediately after the murder of Amir Alam Khan I, which took place shortly after Nader Shah's murder, Nasser Khan allied himself with Ahmad Shah *Dorrani* who had just founded the kingdom of Afghanistan. On Ahmad Shah's demise in 1772, Nasser Khan claimed independence and began expanding his dominion within Iran.[57]

Iran was, at this time, in a state of confusion, suffering from armed conflicts between the houses of Zand and Qajar led by Lotf-Ali Khan and Agha Mohammad Khan respectively. Nasser Khan died in 1795 and on his death the Gitchkis took advantage of the confusion at Kalat to shake off the Kalat yoke. They were subdued again in 1831 by Mehrab Khan.[58]

By the turn of the nineteenth century the Qajars had established themselves firmly in control of Iran. Claims of sovereignty to the whole of Baluchistan were revived by Mohammad Shah Qajar (1834–1847), and Bampur was taken from the rebellious chiefs in 1834.[59] The newly appointed governor of Kerman, Ebrahim Khan, subsequently recovered Geh, Qasreqand, Dizzak, Bahu and Sarbaz. Esfandak and Chahbahar were recovered in 1872. Chahbahar had hitherto been held by the Arabs of

Muscat for a brief period of time.[60] The Qajar, nevertheless failed not only in recovering all of Iran's lost possessions in Baluchistan, but also in defining a clear framework within which relationships with the autonomous chiefs of the peripheral districts of the country would be governed. They also failed in defining any comprehensible frontier limitation around the country.

The Qajars even failed to place troops in charge of the localities they recovered from the rebellious chiefs in Baluchistan. Thus, at the time of boundary delimitation in the district of Baluchistan in 1870s it had become clear that the eastern half of Makran and Baluchistan had fallen to the autonomous Khan of Kalat who had accepted British protection and suzerainty, and the western half had returned to Iran.

British influence in Baluchistan and Sistan began as from the turn of the nineteenth century. Realising the importance of Bulan Pass to the security of India, the British during their expedition to Afghanistan, sent troops to Kalat to punish Mehrab Khan who had caused them much trouble. Kalat was reduced and the Khan killed in the war. Two years later, the Baluchis revolted against British interference and fought against them, which resulted in their submission to the rule of Nasser Khan II.[61]

Having annexed Sind in 1843 and the Panjab (Punjab) in 1848, the British increased their influence in Baluchistan. In 1854 they signed an agreement with Nasser Khan whereby the British undertook to pay him annually in return for his acceptance of becoming a British protectorate.[62] Nasser Khan II died in 1857 and was succeeded by his brother Mir Khodadad who adhered to the said agreement with the British in return for a doubling of the annual payment. These developments brought Iran and Britain face to face in Baluchistan and caused friction between them. Expressions of the desire by the British to extend their telegraph line westward from Gwader to the Straits of Hormuz at Jask deepened these frictions and necessitated a well-defined boundary between the two powers. Coinciding with these developments was friction between Iran and the newly revived state of Afghanistan over the province of Sistan. The Afghan Amir Shir-Ali Khan had asked the British to intervene on behalf of his government[63] by offering arbitration between the two countries, which was accepted.

The Goldsmid Line of Perso-Kalat boundaries

In 1870 it was agreed that the disputed frontiers of Iran and Afghanistan should be settled through British arbitration, but the Afghans informed the British that the arbitration should be postponed for a year or so owing to the internal problems of that country.[64] The Iranian government appointed as commissioner, Mirza Masum Khan Ansari, an official of the Foreign Ministry, apparently related to Mirza Saeed Khan (Ansari), Naser ad-Din Shah's Foreign Minster for 28 years. The government of India had already assigned,

on the persistence of the Afghan Amir, Colonel (later General) Frederick Goldsmid, director of British Telegraph Wire Construction in southern Baluchistan as the arbitrator.[65]

The Afghan Amir's request in 1870 for British intervention in his border disputes with Iran provided the British with the opportunity of defining a borderline in Baluchistan. It was a year earlier that the India Office had urged the Foreign Office to invite the Iranians to agree to adjustment of their eastern frontier.[66]

As delimitation of Iran–Afghanistan boundaries in Sistan was delayed, however, Goldsmid was instructed to proceed with the delimitation of Baluchistan boundaries. Goldsmid – by this time promoted to the rank of Major-General – proposed in a letter to the governor of Bombay to start from Bampur to the most northeasterly point practicable on the Baluchistan frontier, proceeding thence southward to the sea.[67] The government of India, who had actually advised Goldsmid as to where precisely the Baluchistan boundary should be defined, agreed to this proposal. In clauses 3 and 4 of his letter to General Goldsmid, the Secretary to the Foreign Office of the government of India actually names all the places that the latter should take into consideration as belonging to Iran or Kalat.[68] The unfavourable disposition of British India towards Iran's rights of sovereignty even in its own section of Baluchistan was further demonstrated in clause 8 of the same letter. There the authorities in Bombay suggest involving the Muscat Arabs in the proceedings of Baluchistan boundary arbitration because they once had leased Gwater and Chahbahar from the Iranian government.

The first dispute between the two commissioners, however, occurred before the actual commencement of the surveying of the frontiers. The initial dispute was on the introduction of Faqir Mohammad Khan a well-known British protégé, as commissioner representing the Khan of Kalat. The Iranian commissioner argued that the boundary commission was there only to survey and draw up a map of the frontier areas for the diplomats of Iran and Britain to negotiate in Tehran for settlement, not to carry out boundary adjudication that would necessitate the participation of a Kalat representative. His argument was based on the contents of the letter in which the Iranian Foreign Minister informed the British of Iran's conditions for agreeing to their proposals of boundary delimitation. In that letter he stated:

> The said commission will be at liberty to . . . draw a map of Persia's possessions in Baloochistan . . . and bring the same with themselves to Tehran. That question will be then justly decided with the knowledge of the British government.[69]

The problem was solved, however, as a result of British influence in Tehran which secured an instruction from the Iranian Foreign Ministry to Mirza Masum Khan to 'accept Kalat Commissioner if all right'.[70]

Before settlement of this problem was effected another problem of greater magnitude threatened the mission. This time Tehran brought to the attention of the British Minister on the 5th March that: according to some reports from the Iranian Commissioner, General Goldsmid had undertaken a series of proceedings deemed to be damaging to the rights of Iran around the disputed areas and were provocative.

> According to the reports from the Persian Commissioner, General Goldsmid had openly declared places avowedly Persian to belong to Kalat, and had unsettled men's mind by enquiring about the right of Persia to other places already in her possession, and indisputably belonging to her. Another subject of complaint was that of the tumultuous demonstrations on the part of the Kalat authorities, and the expedition of troops with drums, trumpets, & c., from Gwadur into the Kaj territory at the instigation of the British authorities. His Majesty, the Minister observed, was so offended at these proceedings, that he would consider himself justified in recalling his commissioner. His sole object with regard to the disputed Perso-Kalat frontier was that the Commissioners should conduct an inquiry into the matter in an orderly and quite way, draw up a map of that frontier line, and bring it to Tehran, where the subject would be settled between the Persian and British Governments.[71]

On his part, in despatch no. 67 to the Secretary of State for India, dated 18th March 1871, General Goldsmid accused Mirza Masum Khan of similar undertakings and suggested that 'the whole action of the Persian Commissioner leads me to the thankless conclusion that an enquiry such as contemplated by Her Majesty's government cannot now be carried out on the Perso-Baluch frontier unless under diplomatic influence at Tehran'.[72]

The differences between the Iranian commissioner, supported by Sardar Ebrahim Khan, governor of Bampur, and the British Commissioner, supported by the Khan of Kalat, stemmed principally from Mirza Masum Khan's distrust of the true intentions of the British arbitrator. In a despatch to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he indicated that since all intentions of Goldsmid could be seen in his notes, he would send to the Foreign Ministry the collection of notes of his conversation with the 'English officer'. He added:

> ... this officer had no intention other than supporting and strengthening the Khan of Kalat and making up documentary evidence to prove that Kaj, Tump, and ... belonged to the [said] Khan, and that [Goldsmid] was very annoyed with (me) because of lack of cooperation in furthering the intentions of the said officer.[73]

As these differences intensified between the two commissioners, both governments advised their respective commissioners to cooperate with each other. Nevertheless, the two commissioners continued the task of surveying frontier areas without tension between them subsiding. When Goldsmid assigned Captain Lovett of his commission to survey and draw up the map of border areas, it was discovered that Iran's claims on certain localities was not acceptable to the Kalatis. He wrote to Mirza Masum Khan about this, stating: 'as the claim made by Persia to Kuhak and Esfandak have not been accepted by the other side and as they have several witnesses on their side ready, I think it advisable that this matter should be at once enquired into'.[74] Mirza Masum Khan protested against this suggestion and asserted in reply:

> First, Kuhak and Isfandak are dependencies of Dizzak, and have nothing to do with the enquiry you are appointed for. Secondly, the Kalat Commissioners have been specially appointed to discuss the question of the frontier of kaj and its dependencies. What right have they to make a claim on Dizzak and its dependencies that they should waste your time and delay us in these useless matters?.[75]

Having disputed Goldsmid's method of determining opposing Iran–Kalat sovereignties in the disputed areas, Mirza Masum Khan kept aloof. Nevertheless Goldsmid continued with his work without Mirza Masum Khan's cooperation. He thus completed his task and telegraphed the British minister in Tehran on 19th April suggesting that his findings and maps be put forward for discussion in Tehran[76]. This happened the way it was suggested and the Iranian government accepted on 23rd August that boundary awards should be made on the basis of Goldsmid's findings and his map. This was done by the Iranian authorities in spite of writing to the British minister in Tehran a week earlier expressing regrets for the way General Goldsmid had, on his own, conducted the survey of the border areas.[77]

Not only did the Iranian government accept Goldsmid's one-sided report and map as the basis for discussion, but also limited the so-called discussion to one meeting between its Foreign Minister and the British minister in Tehran accompanied by General Goldsmid. Mirza Masum Khan's absence in that 'meeting' was blamed on having 'fallen ill'.[78] Goldsmid's suggested boundary line was then referred to the Shah who modified it partly by including in the Iranian side of the border line such localities as Kuhak in the north, and lands comprising the Nahang and Dasht Rivers from Mond to the sea, abandoning Gwadur Bay and Kaj.[79] Finding the Iranians so serious on the question of Kuhak, General Goldsmid advised the government in India that Kuhak should be given to Iran.[80] His advice was not taken on board in India, and the British minister in Tehran officially informed the Iranian Foreign Ministry in a memorandum on 1st September 1871 of the boundaries

delineated in Baluchistan, from Guater as far north as Jalq in accordance with Goldsmid's map and his findings. The memorandum outlines in part:

> To summarise: Punjgur and Parun and other dependencies with Kuhak; Boleida, including Zamiran and other dependencies; Mond, including Tump, Nasser Abad, Kaj, and all districts, dehs and dependencies to the eastward; Dasht with its dependencies as far as the sea; these names exhibit the line of actual possession of Kalat, that is to say, all tracts to the east of the frontier of actual Persian possession, which frontier comprises Dizzak and Bampusht, Sarbaz and Peshin, Bahu and Dustyari.[81]

Replying to this memorandum, the Iranian Minister of Foreign Affairs stated his government's acceptance of the delimitation in spite of Iran's clear right over most of Baluchistan.[82] Notwithstanding the strange way in which Iran accepted Goldsmid's Line in Baluchistan, Iranian officials unofficially informed the British minister in Tehran that Kuhak and parts of Mashkil Valley should go to Iran. These demands soon proved that a final agreement of these boundaries was impossible and the question of Kuhak and Mashkil Valley remained to be settled later. It was shortly after the completion of the delineation tasks and Goldsmid's departure from Iran that Sardar Ebrahim Khan, governor of Bampur, captured Kuhak and other parts of the Mashkil Valley.

The Holdich Line of the Perso-Kharan boundary

While the Goldsmid's line defined the limits of Iran's possessions in Baluchistan, Kuhak and Esfandak remained out in the cold. The Iranian government though accepting in principle the Goldsmid Line, did not agree with his decision on the northern section of that line. Apart from Kuhak, Esfandak and the Mashkil Valley, the remaining stretch of frontier areas included a long space as far north as the River Hirmand in Sistan. That stretch of land included in all, 300 miles of undefined and unmapped frontier.[83]

The decision to leave areas to the north of Jalq undefined by Goldsmid's commission was due to the fact that Azad Khan, chief of Kharan, considered himself and his dominion to be independent of that of the Khan of Kalat. In 1884 however, under Sir Robert Sanderson's auspices, Azad Khan obtained recognition with the Khan of Kalat as one of his sardars.[84] Without any historical and legal dependency of Kharan to the Afghans, he wrote to the Amir of Afghanistan to ask if there was any objection in Kabul to his submitting to the British government (the British had by then bought Kalat from its Khan). Seeing his own survival and that of a united Afghanistan largely dependent on British goodwill and on the geo-strategic consideration of the British government in Central and south-west Asia, the Afghan Amir

gave his consent[85] to Kharan submission to Kalat. This was, in effect, giving consent to Kharan's submission to the British Indian government, which was, by this time, in direct control of the whole of eastern Baluchistan including Kuhak. The Iranians, at this time, reasserted their control of Kuhak, which motivated the British authorities to seek delimitation of boundaries in these frontier areas. There were a number of reasons for the British to enforce boundary lines in the tracts to the north of Jalq and Mashkil river as outlined by Captain Macdonald in a memorandum on the subject.[86]

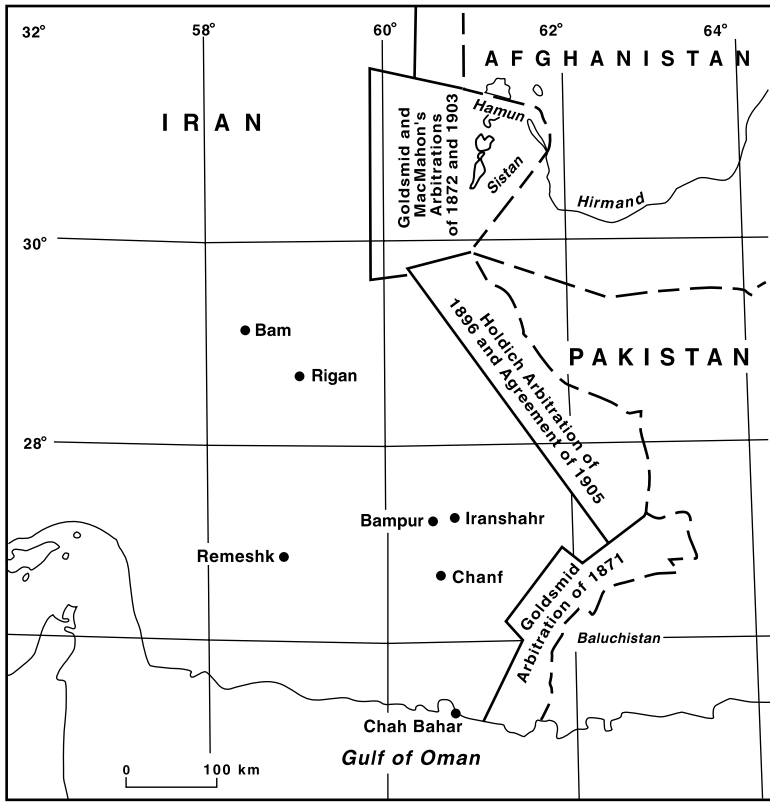
By December 1895, however, the two sides decided to demarcate the tracts between Kalat and Sistan territory. An agreement signed in Tehran by the Iranian Prime Minister and the British legation allowed the demarcation of these boundaries to proceed.[87] The British had, by this time, resolved that more than 21 of Iranian possession of Kuhak and Esfandak was too long a period of time to be easily ignored.[88] Kuhak and Esfandak were, thus, returned to Iran.

The actual delimitation of these boundaries was agreed by the two parties in Tehran on the basis of Colonel Holdich's final report on the proceedings of the Irano-British Baluchistan Frontier Delimitation Commission. The details of this delimitation appear in the Tehran agreement of 27th December 1895, which allowed the two sides' representatives to carry out demarcation of the boundary.

Colonel T. Hangerford Holdich and his Iranian counterpart completed the demarcation task by late March and signed on 24th March 1896 an agreement on the completion of demarcation which was submitted to their respective governments in early April 1896, finalizing the boundary settlement of northern Baluchistan.[89] This boundary has recognized Kuhak, Esfandak and areas west of the Mashkil River as Iran's possessions. It, nevertheless, deprived Iran of most of the Mashkil district and more importantly, the Mirjaveh town and district and its strategic points. British authorities were aware of Iran's losses in this settlement as British boundary expert, Captain Durand stated in his letter of 20th January 1896 to the Marquis of Salisbury.

> Your Lordship will see that the convention secures for Kelat considerably better terms than the government of India was willing to accept. I thought it desirable to keep something in hand for future exchange or concession. Our Commissioners will now be in good position for they can make considerable concessions to Persia if they should wish to do so, while still reserving to Kelat all that the government of India thinks necessary.[90]

It is also noteworthy that in 1900 the government of India bought the interests of the Khan of Kalat in the Nushki district[91] in order to safeguard their protectorate's interests in that district.



Map 5.3 The Goldsmid and Holdich Lines in Baluchistan.

The 1905 settlement

When settling the boundary to the north of Jalq Colonel Holdich based his information on a map that the British claimed to have proved by subsequent investigations, to be wrong. Realising this the British discovered that if they were to demarcate the boundary on the basis of this map, the result would very likely bring their Padaha post well within Iranian territory. They therefore assigned Captain Webb Ware to survey the areas concerned and prepare a report on the actuality of the boundary line. This he did in 1902 and the map he prepared put Mirjaveh within Indian territories. This action disturbed the Iranians and friction occurred between the two countries. In his lengthy memorandum of 5th November 1904, Colonel McMahon, British arbitrator of the Sistan boundaries, proposed a new line to be imposed upon the Iranians, which he alluded to as 'the red line' as opposed to that of Holdich's 'blue line'. This proposal was to take more of Iranian territories so that an Iranian objection would lead to a compromise satisfactory to India.[92]

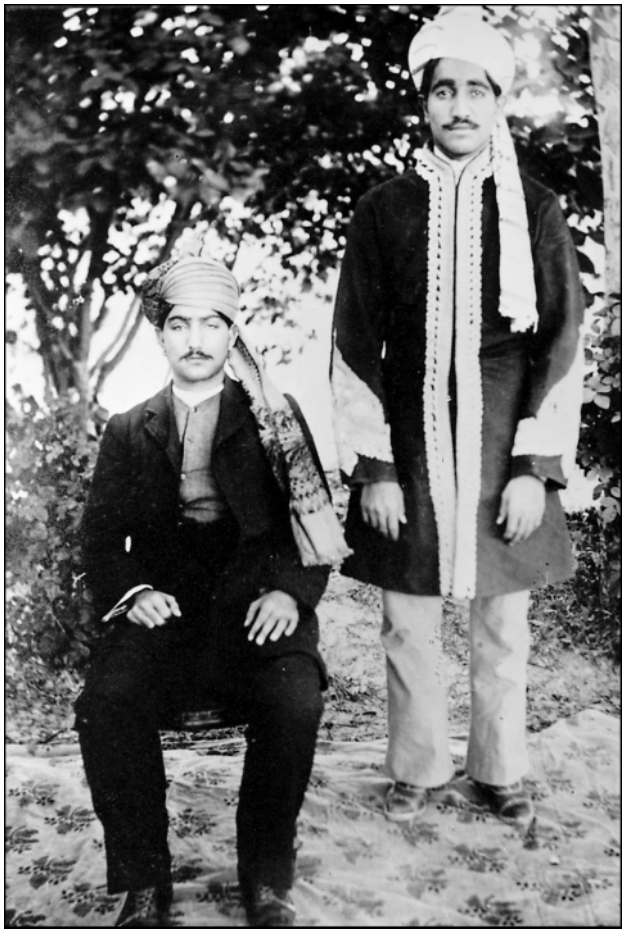


Plate 5.1 Amir Masum Khan Khozeimeh, deputy governor of Sistan at the time of McMahon's water award, seated and flanked by his cousin.

The government of India rejected his proposed red line on the advice of British minister in Tehran, who believed that they could never induce the Iranian government to accept it.[93] He suggested that if the Iranians 'behaved themselves' in Sistan and instructed Amir Heshmat al-Molk Khozeimeh from interfering in the India trade, 'we would leave them Mirjaveh'.[94]

The case of Heshmat al-Molk referred to in this document was that Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Heshmat al-Molk II, the Khozeimeh Amir of Sistan, allegedly supported by the Russians, had enforced an order prohibiting exports of supplies to the British Indian frontiers. In a despatch to the Indian government in February 1902, the British Vice-Consul for Sistan and Qaen reported that in his meeting with Amir Heshmat al-Molk he was told that:

> Mr Miller (Russian Consul) had also been to visit him to impress on him the existence of this order and to warn him that it was his duty to punish Katkhodas of villages who disobeyed it. The Amir added that Mr Miller had also reminded, 'if you cannot look after your frontier yourself, you know that some one else will have to do it for you'. The Amir regarded this an indication of Mr Miller's future designs with regard to our border. On the subject of supplies the Amir said that an order prohibiting their export did exist; but that an exception had always been made in the case of our thanas on the trade route, as the provisions were required not for purposes of trade but as a means of sustenance for the garrison.[95]

A year later Amir Heshmat al-Molk's position as governor of Sistan was threatened, not only by his younger brother, Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II Amir of Qaenat, but also by Moazez al-Molk who was then acting as governor of Qaenat. In the face of these threats to his position, Amir Heshmat al-Molk decided to throw in his lot with the British.[96] He protected British lives and property in July 1903. This undertaking resulted in the Russian consul for Sistan deciding 'to get the Amir Heshmat-ul-Mulk dismissed for his action in protecting British property and interest'.[97] Finding the dismissal of the Amir in that circumstance a grave injury to their prestige vis-à-vis Russia in eastern Iran,[98] the British instructed their minister in Tehran (Sir A. Hardinge) to accept in an agreement the Iranian demands in the frontier to the north of Holdich Line's pillar no. 11. In return they asked for Amir Heshmat al-Molk to remain in his position as governor of Sistan. The agreement, signed on the 13th March 1905[99] though secured the post at Qal'eh Sefid for the British, left Holdich's blue line delimited on the Talab water course, which left both Old and New Mirjaveh to Iran together with the stretch of 300 miles of disputed frontier areas. The two governments agreed to the survey and delimitation of the section of the boundary from the neighbourhood of Mirjaveh to Kuh-e Malek Siah. This undertaking produced no other results but mapping of the frontier areas in question.[100] In 1938–9, similar agreements were reached between the two governments, which proved fruitless also. In 1948 British Baluchistan lost its identity simultaneously with the disappearance of the British India Empire, and was reincorporated in the newly created state of Pakistan.

The British government supplied the government of Pakistan in 1950 with all documents relevant to this portion of frontier area.[101] On 13th August 1950 the daily *Ettelaat* of Tehran reported that the governments of Iran and Pakistan had agreed to demarcate the Mirjaveh-Malek Siah Kuh boundary.[102] This stretch of boundary was demarcated during this author's visit to Mirjaveh in May 2002, with barbed wires in place at Mirjaveh area.

6

THE PARTITIONING OF SISTAN AND THE EVOLUTION OF BOUNDARIES WITH AFGHANISTAN

Introduction

The province now known as Sistan had had various names throughout history: Sakestan, Nimrouz, Zarang, Zabolestan, etc. It formed the fourteenth *satrapy* in the Achaemenian Commonwealth system (559–330 BC) and was part of the *kust* of Khorasan under the Sassanid federation (AD 224–651). In the post-Islamic era Sistan became a major centre of struggle for the revival of Iranianism: many movements began in Sistan and engulfed the entire Iranian Plateau. The Saffarids of Sistan were the first dynasty to throw off the yoke of the Abbasid Caliphate. The subsequent dynasties have always made a point of including Khorasan and Sistan within the countries of Iran. Throughout the Safavid Federation of Iran (1501–1722) Sistan formed the eastern province of Iran, and Nader Shah Afshar (1730–1747) included Sistan in his empire almost at the outset of his career after a negligible period of approximately eight years of confusion in Iran resulting from the Abdali uprising.

Following Nader Shah's assassination in 1747, Iran fell into chaos again. Ahmad Khan Abdali (later Ahmad Shah Dorrani), who founded the Saduzaei kingdom of Afghanistan, used the opportunity presented by Iran's chaos in 1749 to occupy the Khorasan province after defeating Amir Alam Khan I, the Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat who had in 1747 included in his dominion the whole of Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan. From that time the eastern parts of Sistan remained under the control of Ahmad Shah *Dorrani* until he died in 1772 – 23 years in all.

The Saduzaei kingdom in Afghanistan fell into chaos in the wake of Ahmad Shah's demise, while chaos still prevailed in Iran as a result of continued armed struggle between the houses of Zand and Qajar. This situation was further aggravated by a number of other rebellions by various chiefs around the country, who began a life of autonomy. This was mainly because there was no one outright leader in whose favour the traditional custom of allegiance could be practised. The principalities of Herat, Qandehar and Kabul quietly returned to their traditional status as autonomous

dependencies of Iran, and Sistan was under the amirdom of the Keyani family, who claimed to be the descendants of legendary Keyanian of ancient Iran. It was during their term of amirdom that the Baluchi chiefs expanded their domination of Sistan.

From time immemorial Sistan had been associated with Khorasan, even frequently referred to as the 'bread basket of Khorasan'. In the period of the Keyani amirdom however, the province became so thoroughly Baluchized that no longer it could be identified with Khorasan in any way. This change of character made the reassertion of the Khozeimeh amirdom in Sistan very difficult. Even Khozeimeh Amir Alam Khan's establishment of family ties, through strategic marriage with many Baluchi tribes did not completely do away with the Sistani sense of rejection of the Khorasani (Birjandi) domination of Sistan in nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even in the early twentieth-century political organization of space in Iran, Sistan was merged with Baluchistan in the separate province of 'Sistan and Baluchistan'. This change of character has left an almost incomprehensibly long-lasting sentiment among the population that even now one needs to be somewhat careful in referring to Sistan in association with 'the Birjandis' of Khorasan or the 'Sardars' of Baluchistan.

The Keyanis, however, accepted in a bizarre manner the nominal suzerainty of Ahmad Shah Dorrani's successor, Teimur, who used force against them. There was no definite leader in Iran at the time to protect them against Afghan pressure. It was under Fath-Ali Shah Qajar that the whole of Sistan, Baluchistan and Khorasan was recovered between 1810 and 1840. Since then, the governments in Iran never allowed an interval to elapse without immediately reasserting sovereignty over this province.

By the time of the Anglo-Iranian war which was concluded by the signing of the 1857 treaty of Paris, both Herat and Qandehar laid claims on sections of Sistan. Sardar Ali Khan Sarbandi of Sekuheh, the hereditary chief of Sistan who had officially declared in 1853 allegiance to Iran,[1] felt threatened by the claims from Herat and Qandehar and personally went to Tehran to be officially appointed as governor of the province. To further strengthen his position, he married a cousin of Naser ad-Din Shah. This move caused apprehension among some officers of British India that Iran (of feeble Qajar government) could, in conjunction with Russia, pose threats to the security of the British India Empire if Sistan was to remain in its entirety as a province of Iran. At the same time, when Herat authorities were planning an encroachment in Sistan, Colonel Taylor, British Commissioner in Herat, was trying to convince his government to deprive Iran of her rights of sovereignty over Sistan. He wrote:

> ... should Persia be permitted to continue the exercise of her influence in Sistan, she may have it in her power to propagate falsehood to the prejudice of India and, being so near the frontier of

> the latter, they could be freely circulated. On the other hand, if Sistan were the instrument of a friendly power, she might when occasion required, be made to inflict very serious injury to the commerce of Persia by disturbing her southeastern frontier and plundering all caravans.[2]

It was rumoured at the time however, that Ali Khan Sarbandi was to return to Sistan with two regiments of regular infantry and a few field guns, together with able men from Sistan. Before even the Afghan chiefs heard of this rumour, James Murrey, British minister in Tehran addressed the Iranian prime minster on the 5th May 1858 saying that he hoped the rumour of that intention was incorrect 'as the occupation of Sistan', he added, 'which is part of Afghanistan, by Persian troops would be a direct violation of the treaty of Paris'.[3] Replying to this strange claim, the Iranian premier wrote on 13th May stating:

> The Persian ministers have always considered, and do now consider, that Sistan *ab antiqua*, has formed an integral part of the Persian territory, and it is at the present time in the possession of the Persian Government, on whose part it is therefore not necessary that troops or soldiers should be sent, or a new occupation of the place effected.[4]

This statement naturally did not satisfy the British authorities in India, who wished to strengthen the western flanks of the buffer state of Afghanistan. Thus, replying to the Iranian premier on 15th May 1858, James Murrey informed him that the British would not admit the correctness of his view, and claimed that not only by the virtue of political history, but also because of its geographical position, 'which is represented in every existing map', Sistan is a part of Afghanistan.[5] This letter was brought to an end by presenting the following threats on behalf of the British government.

> It is my duty to inform your highness that, if the Persian Government were to send troops into Seistan, a province which is much nearer to Candahar, the centre of Afghanistan, and to the British Frontier, than Herat itself, Her Majesty's Government would consider such a step as a direct violation of the treaty of Paris.[6]

Sardar Ali Khan, however, returned to Sistan with an escort of 300 cavalry men and two field guns, and was murdered in October 1858 by his own nephew, Taj Mohammad Khan, an ex-chief in the Sistan province. Taj Mohammad Khan too declared his allegiance to the Iranian government after a while, and declared himself an Iranian subject.[7] Before his declaration of allegiance to Iran, the Iranian government had decided to send military forces to Sistan to punish those involved in the murder of Sardar Ali Khan.

The new British minister in Tehran, Mr Doria asked in a letter to the Iranian Prime Minister what was the purpose of wanting to send troops to Sistan. In his letter of reply, the Iranian Prime Minister stated that the Shah intended to issue orders to the governors of Qaenat and Kerman to hold in readiness a number of troops to march on Sistan for the punishment of Taj Mohammad Khan and all concerned in the assassination of Sardar Ali Khan. But this was in the event of the people of Sistan refusing to deliver over to the government the perpetrator of the murder.[8] He was once again reminded that the British government considered Sistan as belonging to Afghanistan, a country that was not in existence at the time. In spite of British insistence that Sistan was a part of Afghanistan, Taj Mohammad Khan declared his own loyalty and that of the Sistan governorship to Iran. In a letter to the government of India, the British minister in Tehran, Mr Doria, informed them of the process and ceremonies of Sistan's declaration of allegiance to Iran. He wrote in a cynical manner:

> Two persons were introduced by the deputy master of ceremonies bearing a tray, upon which, were some gold coins. A long letter was then red aloud, pretended to have been written by the ruler of Seistan, making protestations of fidelity and obedience as subjects to the king. The coins on the tray were Shahee Ashrefees struck in His Majesty's name in Seistan.[9]

Eventually, being convinced of the Iranian government's determination to prosecute its ancient right to the sovereignty of Sistan, the British in India found it wise to drop baseless claims to Sistan for Afghanistan and to acknowledge Iran's right to that province. In his brief *History of Sistan and Lash-Jowain*, prepared for the British Foreign Office in 1870, H. L. Wynne reminds us of the fact that Lord Stanley endorsed Mr Eastwick's memorandum on 18th December 1862 with these remarks:

> The general conclusion the fact noted on the preceding memorandum appear to be that Seistan has been for ages, and from a period even antecedent to the dawn of history down to the death of Nadir Shah in 1747, an integral portion of the Persian Empire.

He further noted:

> It ... appears that Seistan can be in no sense included in Afghanistan, being inhabited by different people, who are, for the most, Sheahs like the Persians, and not Sunnis like the Afghans, who speak a different language from the Afghans, and who have never yielded more than a nominal obedience to the Afghan rulers, except to Ahmad Shah, and that only for a period so short as would not

invalidate the claim of sovereignty on the part of Persia, – a claim based on the two titles recognized by international law, viz., first occupancy and uninterrupted possession.[10]

Events leading to the partitioning of Sistan

Dust Mohammad Khan, Amir of Kabul, in July 1861 marched a sizeable army on the semi-independent principality of Qandehar, which was traditionally but vaguely a dependency of Iran save for the duration of Afghanistan's consolidated monarchy of Ahmad Shah Dorrani (1749–1772). This development disturbed the Iranians, who were convinced that Dust Mohammad Khan's plan was to take Farah, Herat and Sistan eventually, as Farah was captured shortly afterward. In a letter to his government in May 1861 the British minister in Tehran wrote that the court of Qajar in Tehran was disturbed by the news that Mohammad Sharif Khan, son of Dust Mohammad and governor of Farah, had been contemplating an attack on Sistan under the pretext of punishing certain Baluchis who had plundered Qandehar territory. He added that the British government could not, in fairness, expect Iran to submit quietly to the invasion of Sistan.[11]

The British government must have been aware of Dust Mohammad and his son's plan to capture Sistan, as the Kabul diary of the British legation of 28th April 1861 indicates that Sharif Khan was contemplating this step. A servant of Taj Mohammad Khan of Sistan brought the news to Mashhad, and said that Sharif Khan had first of all taken Rudbar that belonged to Baluchis, and had then advanced on Jahan-Abad in Sistan, capturing it also. The Governor-General of Khorasan wrote to the governors in Sistan telling them to be firm in maintaining their position until news came from Tehran.[12]

With the experience of losing Herat in the same way, the Iranian authorities appeared to have resolved to go about solving the problem of Sistan in accordance with treaties and documents exchanged between Iran and Britain, specially the treaty of 1857. This was in order to avoid any situation that could lead to the British declaring another war on Iran in support of another Afghan attempt to seize territories from Iran.

In spite of repeated appeals by the Iranian authorities, including the Shah himself, to the British in accordance with article 6 of Paris treaty of 1857 to prevent Dust Mohammad Khan and his forces from invading Iranian territories, the British preferred to remain inactive. Dust Mohammad Khan captured Farah as well as Qandehar, and put Herat under siege in July 1862. With the capture of Qandehar and Farah, Dust Mohammad Khan effectively gained important places in Sistan, such as Chokhansur, Qal'eh Fath and Qal'eh Nad-e Ali, which in previous times adhered to Qandehar under the authority of Kohandel Khan and his sons, who had reaffirmed their dependency on Iran. Dust Mohammad Barakzaei's son's capture of Jahan-

Abad in the Hirmand Delta effectively partitioned the province of Sistan. After some enquiries made by way of correspondence with Dust Mohammad Khan, the British government concluded that the Barakzaei Amir of Kabul had no intention of crossing Iranians frontier and to pursue his war inside Iran.[13] This view was stated at the time when Dust Mohammad Khan's son had occupied Jahan-Abad, an undisputed Iranian town in Sistan. To justify this conclusion, the British in India decided to change their stance by denying once again that Sistan belonged to Iran. This changed attitude would make it possible for the British not to consider Dust Mohammad Khan's encroachment in Sistan as 'crossing Iranian frontiers and taking his war into Iran'.[14] When the Iranian envoy to the Ottoman court explained to the British Foreign Secretary that Great Britain was bound under the treaty of 1857 to 'remove all causes of dispute between Iran and Afghanistan', Lord Russell replied that 'all that Britain was obligated under that treaty was to endeavour to compose such differences'. Further discussion revealed to the Iranian envoy that as far as Britain was concerned Dust Mohammad Khan was entitled to capture Herat but not to invade Iran proper. Lord Russell told the envoy: 'If Dost Mahommed should get possession of Herat and assume an attitude threatening to Persia, then certainly Persia, subject to the provisions of the treaty, might take arms to defend herself'.[15]

By July 1863, less than a month after Dust Mohammad Khan's death, his son and successor, Shir Ali Khan despatched his younger brother, Mohammad Amin Khan, at the head of an Afghan force against Sistan. The long-serving Iranian Foreign Minister, Mirza Saeed Khan, met Mr Thomson, British minister in Tehran, and informed him that: 'the expedition had been ordered by Dust Mohammad Khan, but that it had been subsequently relinquished in consequence of that Chief's death'. Mirza Saeed Khan added that the Afghans were certain, sooner or later, to renew this project and to attempt the occupation of Sistan. But, the Iranian government considered Sistan to belong to Iran, forming an integral part of it, and that they would not hesitate for a moment, should Afghan troops enter Sistan, but would at once despatch a force to resist any such aggressive movement. Replying to the remarks of the British minister that the sovereignty of Iran over Sistan had never been recognized by the British government, Mirza Saeed Khan stated that this was because of there being no mention of Sistan in the treaty with England. Iran would not forego her claims in the matter, but would maintain her right to that province even should hostilities with the Afghan ensue.[16]

The Iranian government subsequently pleaded that since the Afghan occupation of Chokhansur, Qal'eh Fath, Nad-e Ali and Jahan-Abad had in practice partitioned Sistan and there was no reason to believe that their push into Sistan would not go further if the British did not act to stop them, the British should, at least, acknowledge Iran's rights of self-defence in accordance with the provisions of article 7 of the treaty of 1857. Article 7 of the treaty of 1857 referred to by the Iranians asserted:

> In case of any violation of the Persian frontier by the states referred to above (Kabul, Herat, and Qandehar) the Persian Government shall have the right, if due satisfaction is not given, to undertake military operation for the repression and punishment of the aggressor; but it is distinctly understood and agreed to, that any military force of the Shah which may cross the frontier for the above mentioned purpose, shall retire within its own territory as soon as its object is accomplished, and that the exercise of the above mentioned right is not to be made a pretext for the permanent occupation by Persia, or for the annexation to the Persian dominions of any town or portion of the said states.[17]

This provision of the Paris treaty of 1857 made it abundantly clear that Iran had the right of self-defence in the face of Afghan aggression in Sistan. It further made it clear that the Iranian military operation in the Afghan-occupied areas of Sistan would not amount to crossing any frontier into any country in pursuit of the aggressors in order to inflict punishment on them and then withdraw from that country's territory. Iran's frequent representations to the British government eventually resulted in the British Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, writing on the 5th November 1863 the important despatch, agreeing with Iran's right to assert herself in Sistan by force of arms. Lord Russell's letter stated:

> I have the honour to acquaint your excellency, in reply, that Her Majesty's Government, being informed that the title to the territory of Seistan is disputed between Persia and Afghanistan, must decline to interfere in the matter, and must leave it to both parties to make good their possession by force of arms.[18]

Though this despatch was in keeping with article 7 of 1857 Anglo-Iranian treaty of peace, the Iranians did not take it as a 'permission' for immediate action. The Iranian Foreign Ministry, in fact, informed Mr Eastwick of the British legation at Tehran that 'the Iranian Government had decided upon sending Mohammad Kord-Bacheh to Sistan, where he had formerly been employed, but Iranian troops would not enter that province unless an aggressive movement were directed against it by the Afghans'.[19] This aggressive movement came in October 1865, but in a different form. Ahmad Khan, governor of Lash-Jowain in Sistan, who had been for years a self-declared subject of Iran and in receipt of salary from the Iranian government, was persuaded by the Afghan Amir Shir Ali Khan to join him. Ahmad Khan married the daughter of Shir Ali and arranged submission to him, not only of himself but also of the dominion under his governorship. A similar intrigue resulted in Ebrahim Khan, another chief of Sistan to act similarly and to take his quarter of Sistan over to Shir Ali Khan.[20]

Loss of vast portions of Sistan in this manner forced the Iranian government to resort to military operations in order to enforce the above named chiefs' dismissal and to recover territories transferred by them to the Afghans. This military operation, the Iranians argued, was sanctioned by the British Foreign Secretary's despatch of 5th November 1863 in accordance with article 7 of 1857 treaty of peace. Amir Alam Khan III Heshmat al-Molk, the Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat was empowered to advance on Sistan at the head of a cavalry and infantry regiment with two guns, where he was joined by four more regiments and four guns from Sistan.[21] Amir Alam Khan was put in charge of all forces in Sistan in June 1866 and was given the governorship of Sistan in addition to his own hereditary amirdom of Qaenat. His first task was to deal with Ahmad Khan, Governor of Lash-Jowain who had sold out himself and the dominion he was entrusted to the Afghan Amir. Ahmad Khan and others of lesser note were arrested and deported to Tehran,[22] where he remained for some years before his return to Sistan. Amir Alam Khan had also attacked Ebrahim Khan, another chief in Sistan who had also sold out to the Afghans. The Amir of Qaenat and Sistan recovered Jahan-Abad, Jalal-Abad, and Fort (Qal'eh) Nade Ali. Ebrahim Khan appealed to the Afghan authorities for assistance, but his application was turned down. Amir Alam Khan put some of his men in charge of Fort Nade Ali and returned to his headquarters at Naser-Abad (now Zabol) on the western side of the Hirmand River. He received from Naser ad-Din Shah the titles 'Heshmat al-Molk' and 'Amir Tuman', which signified the Shah's pleasure with his success in repelling aggression against Sistan.

Frustrated by the Afghan Chief's lack of enthusiasm in defending him, Ebrahim Khan turned to the British for assistance, but to no avail.

Goldsmid's arbitration of Sistan boundaries

The Afghan Amir Shir Ali Khan formally asked the British in 1870 to intervene on behalf of his government in Sistan.[23] British authorities in India contacted the Iranian government offering arbitration between the two neighbours in accordance with article 6 of the Paris peace treaty of 1857.[24] The Iranians accepted the offer on the condition that a British commissioner should go to Tehran and proceed from there to Sistan in company of the Iranian commissioner. They were to inspect current Iranian possessions in Sistan and to bring the maps conjointly to Tehran, which after being laid before the Shah would be communicated to the British government.

> The British would then in friendship and according to the first basis entered upon between the Iranian Foreign Ministry and the British Legation in Tehran] in conformity with Earl Russell's letter and the memorandum sent to the Legation, amongst which was the one dated the 19th April, define the boundaries of Iranian possessions in

> Sistan, and also of that portion which the Iranian government had not yet endeavoured to obtain possession of according to its natural sense of justice.[25]

These conditions were received and acknowledged by the British in India.[26] The arbitration commission, led by Major General (later Sir) Frederick Goldsmid, was formed on 9th August 1870 on the instruction of the British Secretary of State for India.[27] Goldsmid was joined by Mirza Masum Khan Ansari as commissioner for Iran, and Seyyed Nour-Mohammad-Shah Khan Foshenji as Commissioner for Afghanistan. Shortly afterward the Afghan Amir requested a delay of approximately a year for the boundary arbitration work to start in Sistan owing to the disturbances occurring in his country. As was described in the previous chapter, the arbitration commission proceeded with the delimitation of Baluchistan boundary between Iran and Britain in the Makran and Kalat districts. This task was completed in September 1871, while General Goldsmid had been re-assigned in May to lead the Sistan boundary arbitration commission.[28] From the Iranian side, Mirza Masum Khan Ansari was also re-assigned as the Iranian commissioner. Mirza Masum Khan and General Goldsmid were re-appointed to this task in spite of great difficulties had developed in their relationship during the Baluchistan boundary delimitation, which prevented cooperation between them.

Before any problem occurred between the two commissioners in their new assignment, a difficulty emerged resulting from the advance of an Afghan force towards Iranian territory in Sistan, seemingly to start war on Iran because the latter would not accept British arbitration. The British minister in Tehran, being informed of the matter, wrote to the Viceroy of India asking him to induce the Afghan ruler to abstain from hostility.[29] This was done satisfactorily.[30] The reason for the Iranian government's reluctance was that the British had proposed a few conditions in order to increase Goldsmid's authority in deciding where to go in Sistan, what to do, whom to see, and when to return. The Shah eventually acceded to these conditions in October 1871, and the British minister in Tehran communicated the news to the government of India.[31] The arbitration commission, thus, assumed full legal status and was furnished with masses of literature on relevant correspondence and historical account of Sistan disputes, including H. L. Wynne's 75 pages of *History of Sistan and Lash Jowain*, which was prepared on 6th July 1870 for the government of British India. These literatures bluntly favoured the Afghan claims on Sistan.

The British in India in the meantime pacified the Amir of Afghanistan in his military threats against Sistan and assigned Colonel (later General) F. R. Pollock to supervise the Afghan commissioner during the arbitration proceedings. The Iranians questioned the purpose and the nature of this appointment as will be examined later. Moreover, the Iranian commissioner began his suspicions of General Goldsmid's misguided approach towards Iran's

rights to the sovereignty of Sistan began from the beginning of Baluchistan boundary arbitration a year earlier. A fierce correspondence started between the two commissioners as soon as the arbitration proceedings began in Sistan. The Iranian Commissioner, for instance, wrote to the British commissioner on the 9th February 1872 warning that the passage in arbitration agreement, which allows the arbitrator to visit any place he may deem expedient, does not mean that current Iranian possessions in Sistan should be again submitted to enquiry.[32] To this, Goldsmid replied that regrettably he could not change the opinion he had already communicated to the Iranian commissioner.[33]

Not satisfied with this reply, Mirza Masum Khan raised the issue of Colonel Pollock's role in the arbitration task and wrote to Goldsmid stating: 'I have again to request that you will be kind enough to inform me in what capacity and with what object Colonel Pollock accompanies the Afghan Commissioner?'.[34] In an evasive reply Goldsmid wrote back stating: 'the above mentioned gentleman, will on arrival, give me such assistance in the work of the mission as I may require from him'.[35]

General Goldsmid's description of Colonel Pollock's role in the arbitration process was not completely honest, especially when where he claimed that Pollock's mission was to aid him, whereas official documents had it that he was specifically assigned to supervise the Afghan commissioner. Despatch No. 1614 of the government of India, for instance, specifies Pollock's mission as to: 'carefully advise the Afghan Commissioner as to his proceedings, and without assuming a position of partiality, should see generally that the views of the Cabul (Kabul) Government, whom the Commissioner represents, are fully and fairly explained'.[36]

Colonel Pollock, accompanied by the Afghan commissioner and a large escort, arrived in Sistan in early March 1872. The Iranian commissioner protested against the presence of such a large number of local chiefs from Afghanistan accompanying Colonel Pollock and the Afghan commissioner on Iranian soil. In a letter to Goldsmid, Mirza Masum Khan stated:

> I have thought it necessary to ask you the reason for the presence of Sardar Ahmad Khan and Mardan Khan, and Dust Mohammad Khan and others, with such a following; and why they accompanied the Afghan Commissioner into Iranian territory, give me, please, speedy information on this matter.[37]

Most of these individuals and the armed men were, as a result of this protest, returned to Afghanistan and though Amir Alam Khan III, the Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat and Sistan, received Colonel Pollock with due honour and respect, he refused to receive the Afghan commissioner.

A further complication occurred regarding the arbitration team's flying of the Union Jack in front of their tents, which gave rise to unpleasant rumours among local people and headaches for the Amir of Qaenat and Sistan. After a

long argument the Iranian commissioner found a solution: Goldsmid was to write to Amir suggesting flying the flag above the tent, and the Amir could use the letter in explaining the position to his subjects. This letter was sent and the problem solved.

The arbitration commission decided to visit not only the frontier areas but also places within Iran's undisputed possessions. This decision caused more friction between Goldsmid and Mirza Masum, who protested against Goldsmid's examination of areas in actual Iranian possession. Mirza Masum thus suspended his own mission in Sistan and returned to Tehran in the vain hope that the Iranian authorities would act on his protests against Goldsmid's proceedings in Sistan. In the absence of Mirza Masum the arbitration commission visited the Hirmand Delta and other places in and around the province and interviewed many people. It arrived at the conclusion that both ancient and recent rights of the two sides must be taken into consideration, based on examining the actual possessions and documentary evidence produced by the two governments. The Afghan commissioner handed over to Goldsmid a lengthy written statement of documentary evidence. Evidently, it did not matter to the arbitration commission that no such written statement was provided by the Iranian side as Mirza Masum had departed from Sistan.

Other determining factors taken into consideration were testimonials of the local chiefs and khans as to whom their loyalty would go to as their sovereign government. In order to determine the nature of claims of sovereignty over Sistan, the arbitrator concluded that Sistan was:

> . . . a province on the Eastern Frontier of Persia, which had become comprehended in Afghanistan on its first conversion into a consolidated monarchy by Ahmad Shah Dorrani, but which, by a common process of intrigue and encroachment, had lapsed almost imperceptibly to her stronger neighbour on the west . . . Persia, on the other hand, laid claim to Sistan by virtue of a more ancient sovereignty than that of Ahmad Shah: and justified recent conquest and annexation, within its limits, as the mere assertion of dormant rights.[38]

This conclusion is another example of an attempt by British officers in India to try to establish a historical precedent for territorial claims of the newly established state or country of Afghanistan. If the interests of British India favouring Afghan claims were not known, it would not be easy to understand how the arbitrator could ignore at least three centuries of Iran's uninterrupted sovereignty of Sistan before it was occupied and annexed by the one-man kingdom of Ahmad Shah Dorrani (1749–1772). Indeed it would have been difficult to understand how could he justify this annexation as culminating any right of sovereignty of Sistan for Afghanistan.

Ahmad Shah Dorrani, as has been explained hitherto, occupied Sistan as well as Herat, Qandehar and Baluchistan in the wake of Nader Shah's assassination in 1747 when Iran was leaderless. Moreover, the arbitrator ignored the fact that both Herat and Qandehar revived their traditional dependency on the Iranian federation as autonomous principalities shortly after Ahmad Shah's death and the chiefs of Sistan and Baluchistan declared their allegiance to Iran at the same time. Should the arbitrator acknowledge these facts, he would not consider 'revival of Iran's traditional sovereignty in Sistan and Baluchistan' as 'intrigue and encroachment' in Sistan on the part of Iran. Strangely, when defining the boundaries in Baluchistan a year earlier, the same arbitrator did not consider any right for Afghanistan in Baluchistan in spite of the fact that, like Sistan, parts of Baluchistan had also been conquered and annexed by Ahmad Shah Dorrani in the wake of Nader Shah's assassination. When considering these historical facts Amir Alam Khan Khozeimeh's undertaking in recovering lands in Sistan transferred to Afghanistan by Sardars Ahmad Khan and Ebrahim Khan as a result of intrigues by Amir Shir Ali Khan of that country, could hardly amount to 'intrigue and encroachment' on the part of Iran. Amir Alam Khan III entered Sistan on the order of the Shah of Iran, punished the two rebellious chiefs and recovered Iran's lost territories in Sistan. This whole process was in keeping with article 7 of the 1857 Anglo-Iranian peace treaty of Paris, and was sanctioned by the British government in the form of Lord Russell's despatch in this context.

The arbitrator, nevertheless, decided to examine the two countries' historical rights in Sistan on the basis of events of the hundred years preceding the arbitration date, which conveniently included the closing years of Ahmad Shah Dorrani's career. This peculiar and arbitrary choice of historical background for determination of sovereignty rights in Sistan conveniently excluded at least twenty centuries of Iran's sovereignty in Sistan prior to Ahmad Shah's temporary kingdom of Afghanistan, including two centuries of Safavid's undisputed sovereignty. To fill the historical gap between Ahmad Shah's death in 1772 and Dust Mohammad Khan's conquest and annexation of Herat and Qandehar in 1861 and 1863, the arbitrator decided to consider the above named principalities as having been parts of 'Afghanistan'. By doing so, the arbitrator ignored the fact that Afghanistan did not exist between 1772 and 1863, and that in the interim years the principalities of Herat and Qandehar had returned to their traditional status as dependencies of Iran. It is, thus, inconceivable as to how Sistan's dependence on either Herat or Qandehar in that interim period could culminate in 'historical rights of sovereignty' for Afghanistan. Yet, the arbitrator evidently was not concerned. He conveniently assumed that if Sistani chiefs adhered to Iran's principalities of Herat and Qandehar from time to time, it would culminate in 'right of sovereignty' for the country of Afghanistan, which was not even in existence at that time. He also conveniently assumed that recovering

Sistan's breakaway territories did not amount to anything because no fighting was involved.[39]

By so assuming, the arbitrator dismissed the recovery by military means of territories that had been taken into Afghan dominion by Ahmad Khan and Ebrahim Khan as constituting any right for Iran, arguing that it was done at a time when Afghanistan was leaderless. Here, once again the arbitrator shows that he was predisposed in favour of Afghanistan. Easily he ignored the fact that Amir Shir Ali Khan was the leader of Afghanistan at the time. Albeit temporarily losing Kabul to his rebellious son, Shir Ali Khan was in so firm a position in Qandehar that he successfully intrigued with Sardars Ahmad Khan and Ebrahim Khan of Sistan to join him, an act which precipitated Iran's military action for the recovery of territories lost there. Furthermore, the arbitrator considered Ahmad Shah Dorrani's temporary occupation of Sistan together with Herat and Qandehar (1749), when Iran was truly leaderless after Nader Shah's assassination, as culminating sovereign rights for Afghanistan, but Iran's recovery of its occupied territories in Sistan did not have the same effect in his eyes. The arbitrator eventually rejected Iran's historical rights altogether.[40] He even rejected personal testimonies of allegiance to Iran by the local chiefs as being unrepresentative of the desire of the general public of Sistan.[41]

The initial suspicion that Goldsmid intended to give all of Sistan to Afghanistan was proved to be true during the proceedings. Reporting to the government of India, Goldsmid asserted:

> Ameer of Kain has great power. Persian Commissioner plays his game and talks of Lord Russell's despatch, arguing that no present possession is to be discussed. Writes politely, but acts mischievously and in hostile spirit. Meanwhile much information obstructed and survey far advanced. I hurry completion to be prepared for contingencies.[42]

Based on this information, the government of India decided that all of Sistan could not be given to Afghanistan and it should be partitioned. In a letter to Colonel Pollock adviser to the Afghan commissioner, they asked:

> Government gathers from papers received that the position is this – Persia holds chief parts of Sistan so firmly that arbitration opinion must be in favour of Persia, but that a boundary on Helmund [Afghan pronunciation of the term Hirmand] from Ameer of Kain's bund[43] upwards, might be secured and also a line of river onwards to lake. Can you confirm this as being the position? If so, would such boundary, though not giving all that is desired, satisfy sufficiently Afghan interests? . . . and would Ameer of Afghanistan probably be convinced that it is the best obtainable . . .[44]

The arbitrator thus decided to carve up the province into two sections, referring to them as 'Sistan proper' and 'outer Sistan'. He gave Afghanistan the larger portion and gave Iran the smaller part, and defined the main channel of the Hirmand River on the easternmost part of the delta as the boundary between the two. This decision allocated much of Iran's actual possession, such as Nad-e Ali, Qaleh Fath and much of the territories occupied by the Afghans in the preceding years, to the Afghan claimants. This was contradictory to the circumstances described by Goldsmid as leading him to believe that documents produced in support of Afghan claims did not convince him of any sovereignty rights for Afghanistan in Sistan.[45]

Commenting on Goldsmid's arbitration awards in Sistan, Sir Percy Sykes believed that the arbitrator tried to work out an absolute justice, that is, to give little importance to historical evidence and to put more emphasis on the actual possessions. He asserts: 'the arbitrator had to decide, not so much as to claims – both of Afghans and Persians having laid the district under tribute at various periods – but as to the actual status quo'.[46] Yet, when considering the actual status quo, the arbitrator decided to ignore a number of actual Iranian possessions. Amir Alam Khan III Khozeimeh's actual possessions at Nad Ali and Qaleh Fath and their dependencies on the left bank of the Hirmand River, for instance, were ignored. Similarly a number of actual possession of the Sanjarani and Naruei Baluchi tribes of Iran on the left bank of Hirmand were ignored.[47] Not only did Goldsmid's award fail to satisfy the local chiefs whose lands were given to a foreign government, but also proved to be unpopular with the local inhabitants as well as the injustice that the Iranian government considered to have occurred to her rights in Sistan. By putting the boundary on the main branch of Hirmand River in the delta region, Goldsmid put 'Sistan proper' at the mercy of the Afghans, who could easily deprive the more fertile part of the province of its water supplies from that river. This proved to be the case in the subsequent periods.

The Iranian commissioner, Mirza Masum Khan, evidently endeavoured to prevent the partitioning of Sistan by creating as much inconvenience for the arbitration process as was possible. In his book '*Eastern Persia*' General Goldsmid complains extensively of Mirza Masum Khan's behaviour towards the British arbitration commission. Sir Percy Sykes goes further in accusing the Iranian commissioner of being; 'only anxious to make money, he saw that by fostering this mistaken idea he could advance his private interests'.[48]

It is noteworthy that not only was Mirza Masum Khan not accused of such intentions in any other documents that this author has examined, but there are indications that the opposite might have been true. Letters from Amir Alam Khan III, Heshmat al-Molk's sons Amir Ali-Akbar Khan and Amir Esmail Khan Khozeimeh to the Shah in 1903 indicate that British arbitration commission attempted to buy their father's consent by offers of bribes.[49]

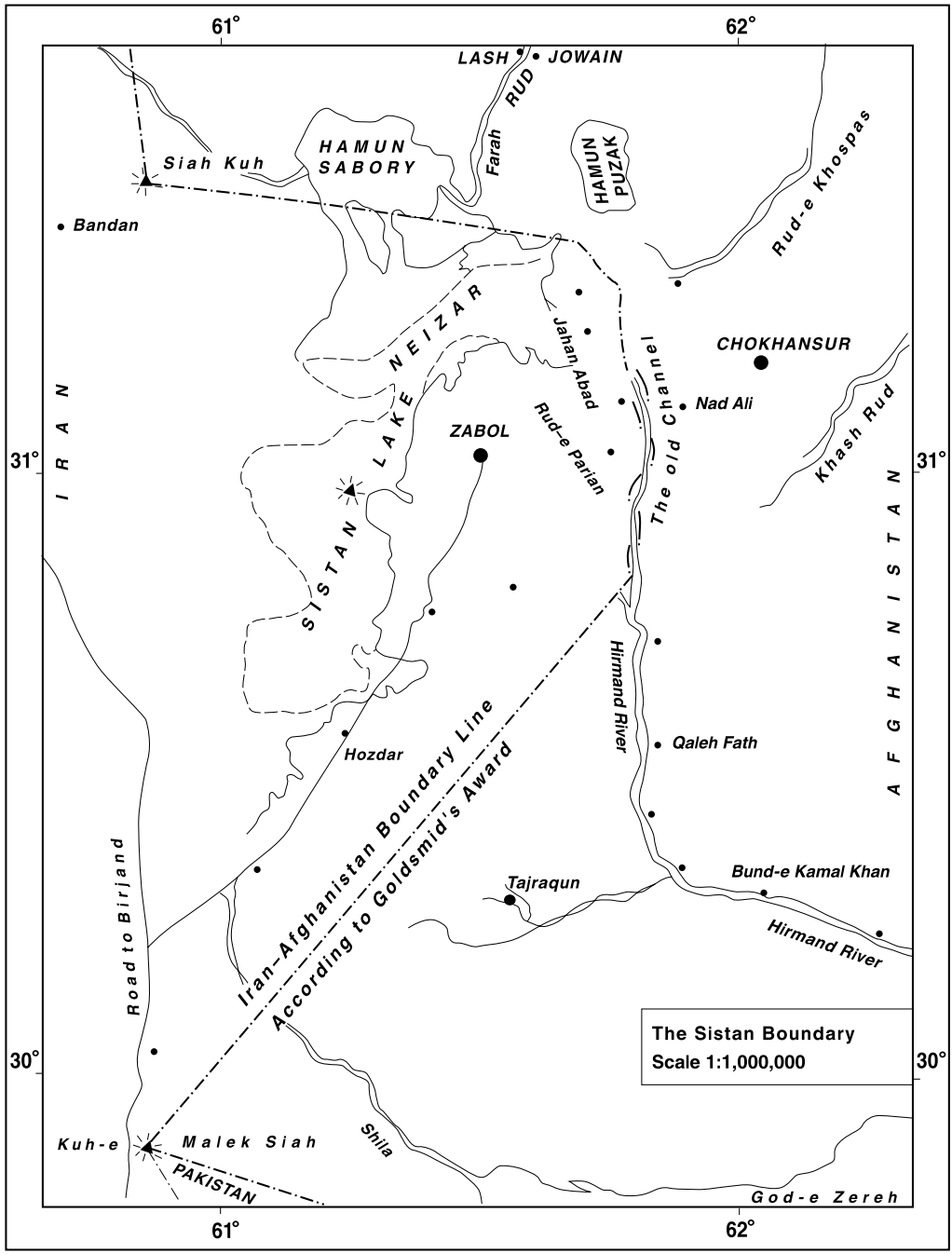
Sir Percy Sykes did not stop at accusing Mirza Masum Khan, without any documented proof, of trying to make money by confronting British arbitrator in his conduct of arbitration proceedings, but also accused Amir Alam Khan III of 'ignorance' and 'jealousy' because of lack of cooperation that the arbitrator expected from him. Even Goldsmid did not accuse the Amir of ignorance and jealousy in that proceeding. In fact his account of the role of Amir Alam Khan III, Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat and Sistan was much more realistic than that of Sir Percy Sykes. Describing a governor's endeavour in preventing eastern half of his dominion from being given to a neighbouring country, as resulting from his 'ignorance' and 'jealousy' can hardly constitute for a fair and impartial observation of events. Not only did the Amir's efforts fail to prevent eastern Sistan from falling to the Afghans, but also many of his personal lands and villages on the left bank of Hirmand were given to them. This was done despite the fact that the arbitrator had confirmed that 'Outer Sistan, on the other hand ... is in possession of Baluchi chiefs who profess to acknowledge Persian sovereignty, or disclaim allegiance to any sovereignty power but Afghanistan'.[50]

General Goldsmid's arbitral award of 19th August 1872 was, however, submitted to the two governments of Iran and Afghanistan. This award delimited the Sistan boundary as shown in Map 6.1 and described in the following list.

1 From Siah Kuh, near Bandan, which is the beginning of the Qaenat district a line to be drawn to the southern limit of the Neizar (reed forest) towards Lash-Jowein. Thence the line continues to a point named Shahi, which is the end of Hirmand's main waterbed.
2 From Shahi the boundary takes a more northwest to southeast direction to Korki.
3 From Korki the boundary follows the Hirmand River's main channel upstream as ar as Kuhak.
4 From Kuhak the boundary takes a northeastern to south-west direction in a straight line across desert as far as Kuh-e Malek Siah, the highest peak of which is the beginning of Baluchistan and the dividing point of the Iran–(Pakistan)–Afghanistan boundaries.

The map prepared by the engineers of the arbitration commission showed inaccuracy in tracing the boundary line, especially in areas northeast of Mian Kangi and southeast of Lash-Jowein. This inaccurate map caused many disputes later and was used by the Afghans to justify their encroachments in the Iranian side of the river.

General Goldsmid, however, entered Tehran on 4th June 1872. For reasons unknown, once again Mirza Masum Khan, the Iranian commissioner, was absent. Having left Sistan in protest of Goldsmid's arbitration proceedings, he disappeared from the scene. In Tehran, the famous Iranian diplomat Mirza



Map 6.1 Sistan boundaries (Goldsmid's Line).

Malkam Khan Nezam ad-Doleh replaced him as Iranian commissioner. He and Goldsmid met twice in Tehran in the presence of the Afghan commissioner, to discuss the terms of the award.[51] The commissioners for Iran and Afghanistan raised a number of objections to various aspects of the award, the most significant which came from the Iranian commissioner concerning the two neighbours' rights to Hirmand water in the delta region.

In their appeal against this award, the Iranian government contended, inter alia, that the Iranian Sistan could not live without adequate control of Hirmand, up to Rudbar. This was a statement of fact, which has been attested to by the passage of more than 130 years. The tripartite meeting of the commissioners in Tehran, however, was mostly dominated by questions and answers on the Iranian commissioner's reassertion of Iran's claims to the whole of Sistan.

As the parties concerned could not agree, the arbitration opinion was referred to Lord Granville, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs for adjudication. He overruled all objections raised by the two sides and confirmed Goldsmid's arbitration in its entirety on 7th March 1873, which was communicated to both governments of Iran and Afghanistan who subsequently ratified it.

The Afghans did not raise any objection to Goldsmid's water award, but took issue with British interpretation of clause 4 of the award. They were satisfied by the British Foreign Secretary's decision in allowing them to minimize supply of water to Sistan, and permitted the Afghans to repair the old canals as well as constructing new ones. The Foreign Secretary made his decision permanent.

The way this award was compiled and the manner in which it was accepted by the Iranian government was in complete contradiction of the condition laid down by the same government when agreeing to the Afghan-British request for delimitation of the Sistan boundary and Goldsmid's boundary arbitration.

Hirmand's hydropolitics and McMahon's water award

Rising in the Kuh-e Baba mountain in northwest of Kabul, the Hirmand River flows through the length of Afghanistan for most of its course, but before emptying into Lake Hamun it forms the boundary between Iran and Afghanistan for about 40 to 50 miles.[52]

The name of the river is an ancient Persian adjective: a combination of the two words '*hir*' meaning water in pre-Islamic Persian, and the common suffix '*mand*' which implies abounding in. The combination, thus, means 'the river of abundant water'. Similar descriptive adjectives exist in modern Persian such as 'honarmand' which means a person of abundant artistic talent. The name 'Hirmand' appears in this form in all Persian and Arabic works of geography and history of the post-Islamic centuries. Referring to the city of

Bost in Afghanistan, Maqdasi[53] states that the city and fortress, surrounding by great suburbs, stood one league above the junction of the river Khardarya[54] (modern Arghandab) with the Hirmand.[55] It is for unknown reason, however, that the British travellers and recorders of local geography in the nineteenth century adopted the term 'Helmand' or 'Helmund', a corruption of the actual name, used locally in Afghanistan.

Flowing for about 650 miles in a northeast to southwesterly direction, Hirmand enters the Iranian border area at Kuhak. Its drainage system includes most of the central and southern Afghanistan. It carries a great deal more water in its upper section and its width at Zamin Davar (end of mountain areas and beginning of Afghanistan's central plain) is little less than one kilometre (approx. 0.6 miles) in the spring and summer months, and is about 300 metres (984 feet) in the winter months.[56] Little is known of the cycle of years of drought and high flood. Thus, Hirmand remains one of the most unpredictable rivers of the world.[57]

The highest watermark left by the flood which can be traced around the lake Hamun is five feet above the level in 1903, the year of McMahon's Sistan water award. When the lake established this record the discharge of the Hirmand must have been not less than 200,000 cubic feet a second.[58] In all probability the year that saw such an expansion of the lake area was 1885. This flood prepared the ground for the change of Hirmand's course in the delta region from the old channel to Rud-e Parian, which was completed by another high flood in 1895/6.[59]

The latest reported flood of some consequence took place in April 1991, after many years of low water and droughts, which caused extensive damage in Sistan. This cycle of high flood was followed by a new cycle of drought which is going on at present (2002) and the Afghans decided that Hirmand would not take any water to Sistan from the year 2000.

The question of allocation and utilization of Hirmand water in the delta has always been the most important aspect of border disputes between Iran and Afghanistan in Sistan. Though the actual location of the boundary has long been accepted by both states, disputes concerning allocation and other rights have not as yet been resolved. This is in spite of several attempts in the past 130 years to settle these disputes. The original problem was that the Amir of Afghanistan considered the Hirmand as an internal river of his country, reserving for Afghanistan the right to utilize its water as she wished. McMahon's Memorandum of 25th September 1904 asserts that: 'the Afghan Government do not admit that there is any water question in dispute, as their geographical position makes them sole owners of the whole of Hirmand above the Band-e Sistan'.[60]

By harbouring such consideration, the Afghan Amir, not only ignored the rights of the people of downstream Hirmand whose life depended solely on the water supplies from that river, but also ignored international trends towards recognizing status of rivers passing through more than one country

as 'international rivers'. This trend began with rights on the river Elbe[61] and evolved through a number of treaties and agreements concluded between two or more reparian nations,[62] embodying, by the late nineteenth century, the internationally accepted description of international rivers which can be summarized as follows:

1 crossing the territories of two or more countries;
2 dividing two or more countries' territories,
3 being of economic consequence to two or more nations.[63]

The Hirmand River, crossing Afghan territory into Iranian Sistan, separating Iran from Afghanistan in Sistan and being of vital economic consequence to both Iran and Afghanistan' is undoubtedly an international river in the downstream sections where neither Iran nor Afghanistan should claim exclusive rights. In fact the arbitral award of 1905 and subsequent agreements recognize the status of the international river for Hirmand downstream effectively from band-e Kamal Khan in southwest Afghanistan.

McMahon's Sistan boundaries and Hirmand water award

Not only did not Goldsmid's Sistan boundary award of 1872 settle border disputes between Iran and Afghanistan, but it also added to the causes of friction. Goldsmid's boundary award was followed by further disputes between the two neighbours on the Sistan section of their mutual boundaries. Recurrence of disputes was caused as a result of changes in the course of the Hirmand River in delta region, which began with an unusually heavy flood in 1896. While both Iran and Afghanistan were unhappy about Goldsmid's arbitral award of their mutual boundary of 1872, the new alteration in the course of the river added new dimensions to the old disputes.

In 1896 the Hirmand burst into a new main channel which was subsequently named Rud-e Parian. Afghanistan claimed that boundary line should now follow the changed main course of the river, thus leaving the district of Mian Kangi on the Afghan side of the frontier. Iran rejected the suggestion and maintained that the boundary should be left where it was defined, that is along the old channel (the Nade Ali channel) of the river and that changes in geographical description of the locality should not change the course of boundary lines. Ignoring Iran's argument, the Afghans occupied Mian Kangi, the fertile and valuable stretch of lands to the east of the new channel of Parian and to the west of the old channel. Furthermore, they constructed new dams and canals diverting much of the water from Hirmand to their side of Sistan. The Iranians complained to the British minister in Tehran in July 1902 against Afghan encroachments in Sistan and requested their intervention to stop the Afghan territorial encroachment.[64] The Indian government undertook to remind the Iranians not to resort to force in the

disputed frontier and proposed to remind the Iranians 'of their obligation under article [6 of the 1857 Anglo-Persian peace treaty of Paris] to refer the dispute to the British government'.[65]

The viceroy wrote to the Amir of Afghanistan asking him also to refer the dispute to the British government in India for arbitration.[66] In another letter in September 1902 to the British Foreign Secretary in London, the government of India proposed that Major Henry McMahon should be appointed as the arbitrator of the 'disputed Sistan frontiers'.[67] Both Iran and Afghanistan expressed to the British their lack of willingness in referring their frontier disputes to the arbitration of British officers. This was ignored and McMahon's arbitration went ahead.

The Russian dimension

The Iranians intimated to the British minister in Tehran that the attitude of Russia was the real reason for Iran's lack of desire for British arbitration. Writing to the British Foreign Secretary, the Marquess of Lansdowne, British minister in Tehran informed him what the Iranian Prime Minister had told him about the Russian minister asking the Shah to allow a Russian delegation to accompany the Iranian commissioner, and the Shah had not objected to the proposal. This the British could not accept[68] and their minister in Tehran told the Iranian Prime Minister to remind the Russians of Iran's treaty obligations.[69]

The idea of a Russian involvement in Sistan boundary arbitration was so irritating to the British that they went as far as threatening the Iranians that if they did not submit to McMahon's arbitration the Afghans would be allowed to interfere with water supply in Sistan. This development signified intensification in Anglo-Russian rivalries in the Great Game of geopolitics in the east at the turn of the twentieth century. The British were convinced that the Russians viewed Sistan as the real key to India and thus attached great strategic significance to the position of Sistan *vis-à-vis* India. The Russian consul for Sistan, Mr Miller, the British thought, had become accordingly highly active in the region. An article appearing in the Russian paper *Novoe Vremya* on 2nd January 1903 fuelled British suspicions of Russian objectives in Sistan. The article reads:

> Sistan, by its geographical position and intrinsic nature, deserves, rather than Herat, the name of the 'key to India'. Sistan, that flank positions on the road to India, which it is impossible to turn. Were it in our hands the advance to India would be made far easier. In English hands, all our operations are rendered considerably more difficult. Lord Curzon had a keen appreciation of the extreme importance of Sistan, and he is therefore striving to place it as quickly as possible under British influence. The railway from Quetta

> to Nushgki . . . i.e. towards Sistan, is already under construction. But the Indian Viceroy is not satisfied with this somewhat slow progress towards the object in view. He wishes to accelerate matters.
>
> What would Lord Curzon say if we despatched a mission, with a becoming escort to Qandehar? We have as much right to be disquieted by disputes between the Afghans and neighbouring tribes on the East of Afghanistan, as the English have by such disputes on the West of that country.[70]

The author of this article felt so badly about British arbitration in Sistan without Russian involvement that he proposed active undertakings to remedy the situation. The article stated:

> What role will Major McMahon's mission play in Sistan, that of the representative of Afghan interests, or of a Court of arbitration? In any case we cannot sit as indifferent spectators of such a mission in Sistan. If the English are protecting Afghan interests, we must protect those of Persia. If the English desire to pose as mediators we ask, who requested their mediation? The disinterestedness of England in all affairs that concern her interests is sufficiently well-known. They will so delimitate the Perso-Afghan possessions, in dividing the waters of the Hirmand between the disputants, that in the end the whole of the southern course of the river will be in their own hands.[71]

The Russian Minister at Tehran, in the meantime, informed the Iranian Prime Minister on 2nd January 1903 that the Russian delegate should be involved in the arbitration and Russia should be party to any settlement in Sistan.[72] In a conversation with the British representative, the prime minister (Amin as-Sultan) complained that:

> . . . no political step could be taken by him without exposing himself to suspicious inquiries and interference on the part of either Russia or England. And that these two great powers, instead of discussing their rivalries with each other, always made Iran the victim of their mutual jealousies.[73]

The size and strength of the armed escort accompanying Major McMahon was also a major cause of friction. The Kargozar of Sistan had informed the Iranian government that, on the authority of the Indian press, Major McMahon was bringing with him to Sistan frontier areas an armed force of 800 men and artillery. The Iranian Foreign Minister wrote to the British minister in Tehran in December 1902 protesting that McMahon's mission did not necessitate the presence of so large an armed body.[74] To this letter, the British minister replied that 'Major McMahon's escort consists of a single

company of foot soldier and a troop of *Sawars*, which, as he has to move through a wild part of Afghanistan, can scarcely be deemed an excessive guard for the protection of an important diplomatic mission'.[75]

This reply did not convince Iranians Foreign Minister, who wrote back expressing the desire for the abandonment of the proposed arbitration altogether.[76] Clearly such a change of heart on the part of the Iranians came as a disappointment to the British who were adamant to go ahead with the boundary arbitration in Sistan and keeping the Russians out of it. Hence, in response to the Iranian Foreign Minister, the British minister in Tehran informed him on 7th January 1903 that the arbitration had to go ahead because his government preferred to adhere to the procedure prescribed by the treaty of 1857 rather than trust to chance that the rise of the river might prevent, once and for all, a recurrence of the difficulties.[77] He further notified the Iranian government that the British government would not accede to the proposal of Russia being represented in the boundary arbitration.[78] The British government went a stage further by instructing McMahon to proceed with arbitration work whether the Iranians agree or not.[79]

The Russian ambassador, in the meantime, held a lengthy discussion with the British Foreign Office authorities during which he seems to have acknowledged satisfaction with the assurance given by the British authorities with regard to the strength of Colonel McMahon's escort. The Russians had apparently argued that the matter concerned Russia because they had agreements with the British on the maintenance of Iran's integrity and independence and that it was maintenance of Iran's integrity that concerned Russia in this matter. This argument the British Foreign Office replied with a note that stated:

> ... the British and Russian governments have, it is true, on more than one occasion agreed to respect the integrity of Persia, but it can, however, scarcely be contended that an arbitration for the purpose of settling a local dispute as to water rights can be regarded as affecting the general principle of the integrity of Persia.[80]

The Russian ambassador further declared that there was a considerable Afghan force concentrated near the Iranian frontier and that the Russian government would not agree to any change in the boundary line laid down by British arbitration in 1872.[81] The explanations and assurances given to the Russians by the British authorities in London and by the Iranians in Tehran appear to have convinced the Russians to let the arbitration go ahead. The Iranian Prime Minister, in the meantime, informed the British minister in Tehran in February 1903 that the Russians had abandoned the idea of their participation in the arbitration proceedings and decided to send an officer of their own, to watch proceedings independently.[82]

The arbitration proceedings

These developments coincided with heavy rainfall in Sistan and the rise of the Hirmand River, which increased tension between the two sides. The British Consul's confidential diary of Sistan for the period 1st to 15th December 1902 states that: 'Hirmand had risen considerably. Half the Sistan Band at Kuhak had been carried away, and the Afghan Band at Shahgol, which had been one of the main causes of water difficulty, had also been demolished. A band constructed by the Sistanis just above the Poozeh Jang Jah channel was also carried away'. The same diary reports that Akhund-Zadeh, Afghan Commissioner in McMahon's arbitration commission, had completed the long canal he had been engaged in digging from Kushk above the Sistan Band to Jaroki.[83]

McMahon's arbitration commission was well established in Sistan by June 1903. He was assigned, in the meantime, to extend a telegraph line from India to Sistan and thence to Mashhad. The Russians decided to station their own military signallers at principal points of the telegraph line between Sistan and Mashhad. This decision made Colonel McMahon postpone work on extending the line.[84]

Meanwhile the friction between the Iranians and the Afghans continued. The Afghans dug a canal in 1902 carrying off all the water of the Sikh-Sar channel of the Hirmand River (northern continuation of Nad-e Ali or old main bed of the river) to cultivate the lands between Deh-e Yar Mohammad and Deh-e Hassan Kharut. Abdul-Hamid Khan Ghaffari Yamin Nezam, the Iranian commissioner, contended that the dry channel of Sikh-Sar northwards into the Neizar, marked the main bed of the Hirmand laid down as boundary between Iran and Afghanistan by Goldsmid.[85] The Afghan commissioner Musa Khan (later replaced by Faqir Mohammad Akhund-Zadeh) contended that the old main bed of the river followed the dry channel then known as the Shileh Shamshiri and that therefore all land to the east of that is Afghan territory.[86]

McMahon asserts in his report of 16th June 1903 that undoubtedly the main bed of the Hirmand in past time did run in the Shileh Shamshiri.[87] Having said this, he immediately asserted that there was reason to believe that at the time of Goldsmid's award the main bed followed the Sikh Sar channel. Deh Dust Mohammad and other important villages in the tract between Shileh Shamshiri and Sikh Sar channels were all of recent date within the previous 25 years or so, and were all Iranian. The Afghan villages on the east of the Sikh Sar were also, with the exception of Qal'eh-e Kang, of recent date. Among the local people, Iranian and Afghan alike, the Sikh Sar appeared to McMahon to have long been recognized as the boundary line.[88]

Colonel McMahon's survey of the disputed lands made it clear that if Goldsmid's line was in the Sikh Sar channel, the Afghans were in occupation of Iran's cultivable lands between Deh-e Yar Mohammad and the *Neizar.* But

if Goldsmid's line continued northwards to follow the edge of the Neizar, the Iranians were in occupation of Afghan lands in Neizar beyond its edge. To define a line between these lands McMahon found it admissible to search for neighbouring permanent landmarks instead of demarcation in a low-level tract liable to inundation. He, therefore, concluded that the boundary line should follow a line of prominent mounds or *tappeh* in a series of straight lines from Tappeh-e Kurki and then to the point Salgumi just north of Tappeh-e Shahi.[89] The land around all these *tappehs* is sour salt soil of no value.

McMahon's above proposed line differed from that of Goldsmid's in areas between Deh-e Yar Mohammad, and Takht-e Shahi was to the disadvantage of Iran. Yet, having declared the proposed line as being more to Iran's advantage than Afghanistan,[90] McMahon accused Yamin Nezam, the Iranian commissioner, of being responsible for the anxieties of the Shah and the Iranian government because of reporting to Tehran the incorrect assumption of sinister intentions on McMahon's part. As regards the Afghan attitude on this point, Colonel McMahon believed that protest would be made from Kabul against inclusion of Takht-e Shahi in Iranian territory. However, he thought that it would not be a strenuous protest because of Takht-e Shahi being an Iranian possession for a long period of time.[91]

Meanwhile, conflict broke out between the Iranian Sistanis and Afghan subjects in the Neizar, which resulted in three Afghans being wounded and an Afghan horse being killed. The boundary arbitrator, being informed by the Afghans of the incident, wrote to the Iranian commissioner proposing a line temporarily separating the actual possessions of the antagonists.[92] This proposal was received by the Khozeimeh Amir of Sistan and Amir Ali-Akbar Khan Heshmat al-Molk II with much suspicion. British Consul for Sistan suspected the Russian Consul of being behind it all. In his consular diary of 9th July 1903 he states:

> [Amir Heshmat-al-Molk] received the order very suspiciously, and informed me that Mr Miller (the Russian Consul) had told him that the Viceroy had bargained with the Amir of Afghanistan that the British were to receive all lands south of the Hirmand from Afghanistan, and to give in exchange to Afghanistan a large slice of Sistan land. I disabused his mind of this notion by all the arguments at my command, but I fear he does not yet quite believe in our good faith. Another matter, which makes the Hashmat-al-Molk suspicious of the English is that the *mostofi* of Mashad informed him that they were backing up his enemy, Saeed Khan Narui.[93,94]

The Sistanis in the meantime gathered in large number at the Band-e Sistan to restore it after being damaged by flooding in the spring of 1903. In his diary of 24th August 1903, Colonel McMahon remarks that there seemed to be a difference of opinion on the subject between the Khozeimeh Amir and

the Iranian commissioner. 'The latter do not want the band made while the mission is here . . . The Governor says, very wisely, that he and his people are not going to lose a season's water for anything the government official may think'.[95]

McMahon's proposed line of boundary differed noticeably from that of Goldsmid Line at the northern continuation of Sikh Sar channel. The new line necessitated exchange of a few patches of land between the two sides in order to settle the differences resulting from the implementation of the new line. After some deliberation however, the Iranians accepted Colonel McMahon's proposed line.

Yamin Nezam, the Iranian commissioner, who had been implicitly described by McMahon as being under the instruction of the Russian Consul,[96] showed him confidential telegrams of the Iranian Foreign Ministry's report on the acceptance of the proposed line.[97] Moreover, Yamin Nezam assured McMahon that his letter strongly advocated the new line, and attributed the indecision in Tehran to the Russian interference. He informed McMahon on the same day that he would carry out Tehran's instruction and could say to the Iranian government that the proposed exchange would be advantageous to Iran.

Yamin Nezam's above recommendation was in clear contradiction of McMahon's own description of the lands to be exchanged. In the report of his proposed boundary line of 16th June 1903, McMahon described that lands occupied by Afghans and proposed for exchange, as being 'small tract of poor worthless land'.[98] He described the lands occupied by the Iranians and proposed for exchange, as being 'patches of poor cultivation in the Neizar'.[99] This was not true as the lands that Iran was to give up to the Afghans included some villages as well. Even British officials sensed that Yamin Nezam was suspected by the Iranian authorities of being bribed to support the proposed settlement. In his despatch of 24th October 1903 to the Foreign Office, the British minister in Tehran states that:

> . . . the attitude of the Iranian Government on this question is very foolish, and can only be explained by the supposition that their inveterate suspiciousness of our intentions in Sistan has led them to conjecture that Col. McMahon's proposal conceals some trap and that the Yamin's support of it is due to his having been bribed or talked over.[100]

These were soon to be proved wrong by new revelations. An accountant at the Imperial (British) Bank branch in Sistan gave out information in March 1904 that 'Yamin Nezam had deposited 10,000 qarans with the bank, which he received from the boundary arbitration'.[101] A further proof of falsehood was the recommendation by Yamin Nezam to the Iranian government that the exchange of villages in question was in favour of Iran. This was exposed

in a letter to the Amir of Afghanistan from the Viceroy of India, who pointed out that

> ... from the Band-e Kohak to the Neizar the frontier follows practically the old bed of the Hirmand or Sikh Sar, but runs a little to the west of this in one place to include villages now in Afghan possession. These substantial advantages to the interests of Your Highness are qualified only by a slight concession which Col. McMahon has felt called upon to make in the direction of Takht I Siah to the Iranians.[102]

In his letter of 24th October 1903 the British minister in Tehran informed the British Foreign Office that the Iranian government had made their acceptance of the proposed line and exchange on the condition that the Afghans engage not to construct any dam upon the upper Hirmand from Band-e Sistan to Rudbar.[103] In his telegram of 12th September to Hardinge, McMahon rejected outright doing anything about preventing the Afghans from constructing bands on the Hirmand above Band-e Sistan. He argued that the question raised about Afghan bands above Sistan lies outside the jurisdiction of his arbitration tribunal, and he had strictly avoided any reference whatever to it in discussions with the Iranians.[104] The tables were eventually turned against Iran and Hardinge indeed succeeded in preventing the Iranians from continuing with these conditions. In a meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister, Moshir ad-Doleh, the British minister in Tehran was told that following an interview that the latter had with the Shah, the Iranian government withdrew these conditions. Instead, they only asked that the Afghans undertake not to destroy the existing Band-e Sistan without Iran's prior consent.[105]

To secure the Afghans' agreement to his proposed line, Colonel McMahon decided to tell them bluntly but indirectly how wrong they were in relying confidently on the vague definition of Goldsmid's boundary line. In a despatch to Hardinge in Tehran, which was referred to the Foreign Office, McMahon noted success in doing so as well as stating that he discovered the Afghans did not possess copies of Goldsmid's award.[106] This tactic seems to have secured the Afghan government's acceptance of his proposed line. The Iranian government's unconditional acceptance of the particulars of McMahon's boundary line was telegraphed to him by the British *chargé d'Affaires* at Tehran on 1st November 1903. The Shah had, on 8th October asked the British through his Foreign Minister if, after the delimitated line was agreed upon with Yamin Nezam north of Hirmand, McMahon would mark out the Iran–Afghan frontier line between Hirmand and Kuh-e Malek Siah so that doors should be closed to a recurrence of the controversies.[107]

McMahon concluded his boundary arbitration award and communicated to the two countries' commissioners in November 1903.[108] This award stated:

> The boundary line in Seistan between Afghanistan on the east and Persia on the west should run as follows, i.e., from the Malik Siah Koh in a straight line to the Band-I-Kohak and thence along the bed of the Helmand river to the junction of its two branches, the Rod-I-Pariun and Nad Ali channel. From here it should follow the bed of the Nad Ali channel into Sikhsar and along the bed of the Sikhsar to the point near Deh Yar Mohammad where the Sikhsar has been diverted towards the west in the water channel shown in the map which joins the Shela-i-Shamshiri near to Deh Hassan Kharat. The boundary line should follow the left bank of this water channel to the Shela-I-Shamshiri leaving Deh Hassan Kharot on the east. It should then run in a straight line separating the hamlets of Deh Ali Mardan on the west from Deh Ali Jangi on the east of Tappa-i-Tilai; thence in a straight line to the most western of the mounds of Tappa-I-Shaharak; then in a straight line to the most western of the mound of Tappa-I-Kurki; thence in straight line to Salgumi and thence in a straight line to Siah Koh, Bandan.[109]

In separate letters to the Iranian and Afghan commissioners, McMahon gave more details of various aspects of his boundary award.

In spite of being deprived of many of their possessions in the areas to the north of Sikh Sar channel and in the Neizar, the Iranian government accepted McMahon's boundary award, but the Afghans complained and argued against it for nearly a year. The Amir of Afghanistan declared his acceptance of the award and stated his agreement to demarcation of this boundary in October 1904.

Colonel McMahon's boundary award was accompanied by a water award, which was issued on 25th September 1904.[110] In it he determined that Iran and Afghanistan should receive from Hirmand, below Band-e Kamal Khan, half the water each[111] regardless of the requisite consumption of the two sides, which have been naturally developed throughout the ages and regardless of the fact that Iranian Sistan was repeatedly acknowledged as being more extensively cultivated and in need of more water compared with the Afghan side of Sistan which was acknowledged by General Goldsmid to be generally barren. Moreover, for reasons unknown McMahon changed this decision later in his formal award by giving one-third of Hirmand water to Iran and two-thirds of it, from below Band-e Kamal Khan, to Afghanistan.

Colonel McMahon, however, completed his demarcation of the Sistan boundary in a few months time,[112] and communicated to the government of India on the 21st February 1905 his report on the final settlement and demarcation of the boundary between Iran and Afghanistan in Sistan. Clauses 1 to 19 of this report deal with the historical background of the dispute and Goldsmid's arbitration. And clauses 20 to 43 explain the way he

determined the Sistan boundary. McMahon had on the 1st February 1905 communicated to the Iranian and Afghan commissioners his report on the demarcation of this boundary.

McMahon's water award came as a great disappointment to the Iranian government while his boundary award dismayed the Sistanis. In a letter to the editor of the *Trans-Caspian Review* of Russia, appearing on 19th March 1905, an unnamed Sistani remarked:

> We beg to request you to have the following particulars printed in your esteemed journal, so that all of the lovers of their native country may know that we have complained, and do complain, about the question of the Sistan boundary delimitation, by which a large and valuable portion of the sacred Persian territory has been added to Afghan territory. But it is a matter of great regret that the high officials of the Government do not listen to our representations and complaints.
>
> It is three years now since the English Arbitration Mission came to Sistan, where they have pitched their camp on the banks of the Hirmand in Persian territory. When they arrived, they said that they would finish their work of arbitration, and that, please God, they would depart in two or three months. But now three years have passed, and yet they say the same, i.e., that they would depart in two or three months. At present they have replaced their tents by building regular houses and apartments. God knows when they will go!
>
> The thing to be wondered at is that this mission was appointed to arbitrate about the waters of the Hirmand. Gradually they began to say that the limits should be duly recognized and fixed. And before the poor people were aware of the matter, the British Mission suddenly fixed a boundary between Sistan and Afghanistan, and built up high and round pillars on the line, in such a way that cattle-owners, flock-owners and cultivators saw that all their pastures and 'Neizar', which specially belonged to the cattle-owners of Sistan, and cultivated and other lands, were transferred to Afghanistan. The wonder is that the high officials of the Persian government had appointed a Commissioner for the frontier to look after it. But when this delimitation was effected, where was he, why did he not prevent them, or at least report actual facts and all the particulars to the high officials of the Government?
>
> The mission from the beginning, up to the present, have been saying that no new changes would be made, but that the boundary line laid down about 32 years ago by General Goldsmid, between Iran and Afghanistan, would be renewed, as in most places it had become obliterated and was not clear.

The correspondent then gives some particulars of the boundary laid down by General Goldsmid, and states that: 'Some of the lands, which by that delimitation belonged to Sistan, have now by this fresh boundary line passed to Afghanistan'.[113]

The author of this letter continued accusing the British of planning to take Sistan for themselves. An accusation much in the same fashion advocated by the Russians at the outset of McMahon's Sistan mission. These suspicions were encouraged by such extremist recommendations as that of Major Percy Sykes, British Consul for Kerman, who asserted:

> As regards the Province of Kain, such is, I understand, not the case, but yet, my Lord, I am convinced that its possession by Russia would constitute a permanent menace to the Indian Empire. The buffer State of Afghanistan is apparently doomed to succumb, and as our minimum share of it would include the watershed, I would submit that we must not leave the flank of Western Afghanistan unprotected.[114]

Nearly a century had to go by to prove the idea that Russia intended to take possession of Qaenat to be unfounded, but the resultant McMahon water award proved to be a real menace to Iran and a devastating blow to the inhabitants of Sistan.

Hirmand water disputes in the twentieth century

Colonel McMahon concluded his mission by the 1st July 1905, on which date he sent his report to the government of India and received from them a congratulatory letter dated 15th July 1905, whereas Sistan's population continued voicing their disappointment with the outcome of his arbitration.

The Times of London featured a long report on McMahon's arbitration proceedings, praising him for the work.[115] Not only was *The Times* wrong in stating that the water award had been decided on existing rights and practices, but it was wrong in stating that the award had been decided in May 1905. This author has not come across any evidence, among Persian and English documents, suggesting Iran's final acceptance of McMahon's water award.

Disputes on the water distribution from Hirmand continued. By the 1930s Reza Shah Pahlavi had established a strong central authority in Iran, and began fresh attempts to settle the Sistan water dispute through direct negotiations with Mohammad Nader Shah's consolidated monarchy in Afghanistan. The first attempt to enter into negotiations with the Afghans took place in 1930. The two countries decided to send their negotiating teams to Sistan, where negotiations could be conducted on the site of the dispute. Iran's mission was led by Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat

al-Molk II, the Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat and Sistan who had by then assumed the surname 'Alam'. His appointment was obviously prompted by his vast knowledge of the problem and his deep interest in the matter. The Afghan mission was led by Abd al-Ahad Khan, Speaker of Afghan Majlis.[116]

The two delegations met at Deh-e Mohammad in Sistan and continued the discussions for two months.

> When the Afghan mission referred to the arbitration of Goldsmid and McMahon, the Amir said we are not prepared to base our talks on foreign arbitration, which had never been officially endorsed. Moreover, those missions were not for the settlement of differences, but to create more cause for disputes between two brothers in religion. Thus, it is not to the interest of either side to negotiate on that arbitral missions.[117]

The Amir, therefore, succeeded in opening up fresh possibilities in the Iran–Afghanistan negotiations on Hirmand water distribution. He demanded for the water supplies in the delta region to be distributed between the two countries on the equal basis, each side receiving half of the water flowing down from Band-e Kamal Khan downstream. The Afghans apparently accepted the principal of equal division of Hirmand water in the delta region, but they proposed for the division to take place from Nahr-e Shahi on the border between the two countries. Hence the two delegations failed to come to a final agreement on the issue of water division in Sistan.

The failure of this mission was immediately followed by eruption of new disputes between the two sides as Foreign and Diplomatic Department of the government of India reported in November 1931 to the Foreign Office in London, outlining these newly erupted disputes.[118]

An incident occurred in Sistan in 1938 involving nationals of the two countries, which brought the urgency of settling the dispute to the attention of both governments. Mohammad Nader Shah's friendly attitude towards Iran at this time made it possible for an amicable settlement to the disputes. An agreement of friendship was signed between the two countries in 1921. A second agreement signed on 31st October 1927 provided for the direct diplomatic settlement of disputes between the two states. A protocol attached to this agreement stated:

> Taking into consideration Article six of treaty of friendship between the Governments of Iran and Afghanistan, the two contracting parties have agreed to the method of appealing for arbitration that, in the event of differences occurring between the two parties, if settlement was not achieved through political means, each side will select an important personality of their country with full authority, and if agreement was not achieved by them, they will jointly select

> an important personality from a third country and the opinion of the third party arbitrator will be final and binding. [Dated sixth of Azar of 1306 (31 October 1927)][119]

It was on the strength of this treaty that Turkish arbitration was requested by the two countries to settle their disputed land boundaries in areas of Musa Abad, Yazdan, Namakzar and Qaenat regions in 1935 (see previous chapter).

As for the Hirmand water disputes, what effected a new treaty was the commencement of a new diplomatic movement in the region involving all neighbours of Iran except Russia (Soviet Union) and Britain (British India). Both these two supper-powers made their disapproval of Reza Shah's new diplomatic initiative known to all, and later (during the second World War) send him into exile. Reza Shah's new diplomatic move included the signing of a regional pact between Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Iraq at Sad-Abad Palace of Tehran in 1937 which gave implicit recognition to the existing border arrangements among the participating states. It was on the strength of the new friendship and alliance that Iran and Afghanistan decided on a fresh attempt for settlement of Hirmand water dispute.

Mr Baqer Kazemi, Iran's ambassador to Afghanistan, was instructed to enter negotiations with the government of Afghanistan. Negotiations between Kazemi and the Afghan Foreign Minister, Mr Ali Mohammad Khan, resulted in the conclusion of a new treaty between the two countries, which was signed on 26th January 1939, articles I and II of which recommended that:

> I The Governments of Iran and Afghanistan agree to divide in equal shares all waters of the Hirmand River, which flows to band-e Kamal Khan (30 miles inside Afghan territory), between Iran and Afghanistan.
> II In order not to use more water then what is taken now between Deh-e Chahar Borjak and Band-e Kamal Khan, the Government of Afghanistan engages not to construct any other stream in the said distance and even not to repair any of the existing ones.[120]

This agreement, though a significant improvement on McMahon's incomprehensible water award, at least from the Iranian point of view, also failed to put an end to the disputes. Notwithstanding the fact that the 1939 treaty was in line with the accepted international standards concerning international rivers, it failed in effect not because of geographical reasons but because of political sensitivities. The Hirmand has not changed its course in the delta region since 1939, but the prevailing atmosphere of distrust and lack of goodwill have prevented genuine efforts for solving the disputes. This agreement was not enforced because the Afghans declined to ratify it, arguing that the Iranian government should undertake, in a separate official

communiqué, ratified by Iranian Majlis, to make no objection to Afghanistan's complete freedom of interference in the Hirmand water above Band-e Kamal Khan.[121]

Within eight years, between 1949 and 1957, and with the help of the Americans, the Abgardan Boghra dam was built at Girishk, the Boghra Canal was constructed for 70 kilometres (approx. 43.5 miles) with a capacity of 2800 cubic feet per second, and the Kajaki reservoir dam was constructed with a capacity of 1.5 million cubic feet. Furthermore, the Arghandab dam was built on the Arghandab branch. Also the Hoghian, Kamaraq, Akhtechi, Gohargan, Juy-e No, Archi Sarvi, and a number of other canals were constructed with disastrous consequence for Sistan.[122] Iran's expression of dissatisfaction with these attempts for diverting Hirmand water before reaching Sistan made little difference to the situation. Prior to these developments, as Afghanistan continuously failed to reply to Iran's suggestions for settlement of the problem, the Iranian government instructed their permanent representative at the United Nations in 1947 to refer the case of the UN Security Council. Before Iranian representation was made to the Council, the US government intervened and their ambassador in Tehran, George Allen was instructed to persuade the Iranians to continue negotiations with the Afghans in Washington. The government of Iran agreed to this course of action and all parties decided to allow an impartial commission to study the amount of water, the size of cultivable lands on both sides of the border river and the water needs of each side, before serious negotiations took place. As a result of this decision a commission was formed of three international water experts from impartial countries, all from the American continent. These were:

1 Mr F. F. Domingez, a water expert and a university professor from Chile;
2 Mr Robert L. Lowry, a water expert from the United States and;
3 Mr Christopher E. Webb, a water expert from Canada.[123]

Having completed their investigation in Afghanistan, the commission continued investigation of the relevant water and agricultural situations in the Iranian Sistan in 1948. Iran's then Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam hosted and guided the commission inside Iran. He told this author on 10th April 1991 that the Commission inspected relevant districts on either side of the river and came up with the incomprehensible recommendation that Iranian Sistan should receive at least 22 cubic metres (approx. 777 cubic feet) per second of the Hirmand water.

Though this amount per second of Hirmand was less than the amount determined by McMahon in 1905, the Afghans declined to accept it. The Iranian government eventually succeeded in obtaining Afghanistan's consent to a new round of talks on the question of Sistan water on the basis of recommendations of this commission. The two governments, therefore,

decided on conducting their own direct negotiations in the United States. Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam headed the Iranian delegation, which included also Mr Ghodratollah Tashakkori and Mr Soleimanpour as water engineers, Mr Abd al-Ahad Dara, Mr Mohammad Sarvari and Dr Mohammad Hassan Ganji. In Washington the delegation was joined by Dr Ali Amini, Iranian ambassador to the US who later served as prime minister. He acted as Iran's chief negotiator. The Afghan delegation was led by Mr Ludin, Afghan ambassador in Washington, and included Abd al-Majid Khan Zabuli, Dr Tabibi and Mr Reza as water engineers.

The summary of 'confidential' notes of the mission sent to this author by Professor Ganji indicate that the negotiations were doomed to fail from the beginning, mainly because of the fact that the Afghans were not prepared to consider any quota of water for the Iranian Sistan above 22 metres (777 cubic feet) per second.[124] On 19th and 20th March 1959 direct negotiations were resumed between an Iranian delegation in Kabul and the Afghan Prime Minister, Sardar Mohammad Davood Khan. He later staged a *coup d'état* against the Afghan monarchy and became Afghanistan's first president. The Iranians put forward a series of proposals to the Afghans during these talks, none of which was accepted.

The governments of Iran and Afghanistan eventually signed in Kabul on 13th March 1973 a new agreement with two protocols about water division of the Hirmand River. This treaty, though ratified by the two Majlis with much difficulties, did not enter into effect because of the Afghan *coup d'état* of that year.

Mr Mahmud Foroughi, Iran's ambassador in Kabul from the late 1960s to the early 1970s,[125] who was involved in the preparation for this treaty, provided this author with a report based on his personal notes of the process leading to the signing of the 1973 agreement. After explaining the result of his investigations in Afghanistan in this report, Mr Foroughi added that 'negotiations with the Afghan Prime Minister in late 1966 resulted in his agreement to the proposed investment on joint projects to be implemented in the Afghan territory.'

The Iranian government instructed Mr Foroughi to proceed with the negotiation with the aim of settling the differences on the basis of acceptance by Iran of the 28 cubic metres (989 cubic feet) quota with joint projects and investments for increasing Iran's share of the water in mind. These contacts continued for several years until Foroughi's duration of diplomatic mission in Afghanistan came to an end in 1971. He was sent back to Kabul by the order of the Shah less than a year later. He indicated in his confidential notes:

> I was sent to Kabul at the head of a delegation for a temporary mission in Shahrivar of 1351 [August–September 1972]. I resumed negotiations there. This time the basis of negotiations was the quota of 26 cubic metres per second. But according to a table prepared by

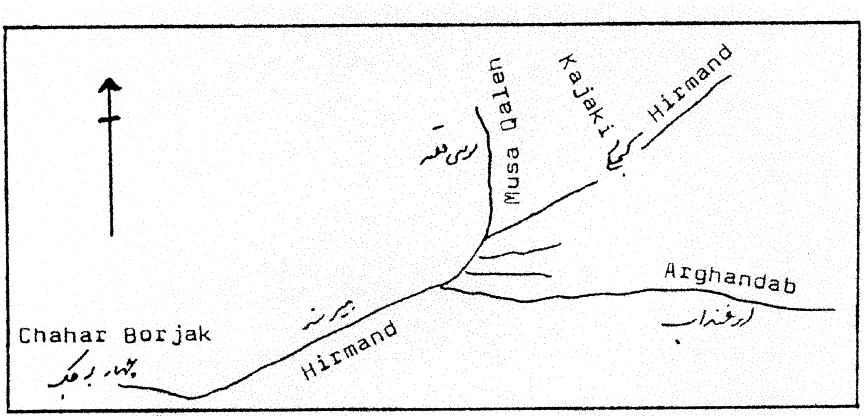
> the Ministry of Water and Power of Iran, additional quota of water would be purchased annually in a separate agreement to be signed with the Afghans.
>
> Agreements between United States and Canada, between United States and Mexico and agreements between some states of the United States on the rivers flowing from one county to another and ways of purchasing water were studied ... The final draft on the measurements of the water was prepared.[126]

Foroughi's advice to the Iranian government was that if Iran wanted to sign a treaty with Afghanistan on the basis of 26 cubic metres (approx. 918 cubic feet) quota per second, it would only be worthwhile if it allowed joint ventures along the river for water management. On the joint project and investments, he pointed out that 'the experts of the two countries had concluded that the Musa Qal'eh branch of Hirmand was the most suitable site for the construction of the intended dam. In an amateurish sketch that I have attached, the approximate positions of the rivers joining Hirmand are shown [see Map 6.2]'.

In an earlier correspondence Mr Foroughi wrote to this author:

> After a few months His Majesty instructed me to go back to Kabul accompanied by a delegation to resume efforts aimed at settlement of Hirmand problem. There eventually we agreed that the new agreement should be first ratified by the Afghan Majlis and signed by the King, then the treaty of water purchase should be signed and the whole package to be presented to the Iranian Houses of the Majlis and the Senate for ratification, to be signed finally by the Shah.
>
> The remaining task still to be sorted out was the method of measuring Hirmand water. A few days (after Mr Foroughi's return to Iran), Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveida informed me that Mr (Safi) Asfia, Deputy Premier was to go to Kabul accompanied by a delegation. I apologized for not being able to go too ... but learnt that treaties were signed and ratified by the Iranian Parliament with no news of water purchasing agreement.

The treaty of 1973 was a complex text, which included 22 cubic metres (approx. 777 cubic feet) per second as Iran's share of Hirmand water, plus 2 cubic metres (70 cubic feet) per second of water purchased from the Afghans by Iran, and another 2 cubic metres per second that Mohammad Zaher Shah of Afghanistan presented to Mohammad Reza Shah as his gift to Iran. Ratification of the 1973 treaty met stiff opposition in both countries' parliaments. One of the vociferous opponents of this treaty was the then Senator Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam who told this author in an interview on Wednesday 10th April 1991:



Map 6.2 Rough sketch of the Hirmand River and its tributaries prepared by Mahmud Forughi to accompany his report on the Hirmand negoitiations of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Sent to the author on 29th August 1990 (names in English added by the author).

Plate 6.2 Satellite photograph of Hirmand, Hamun and God-e Zereh.

My opposition was motivated by two aspects of the treaty; firstly the treaty on the whole denied Iran of her ancient rights to half of the Hirmand water reaching Iranian borders, and: secondly, it recognized all dams and bands and canals that the Afghans had constructed above and below Band-e Kamal Khan contrary to the terms of 1939 treaty and contrary to the previous arbitral opinions concerning the same.

CONCLUSION

The Great Game of geopolitics played out by Britain and Russia in the nineteenth century has undoubtedly made an everlasting mark on the political geography of South, Central and West Asia. The rise in political vigour of the British and Russian Empires in the eastern territories of the federated Persian Empire coincided with the diminishing of the ancient federative system of Iran, and this state of affairs resulted in a political vacuum in those areas. Both Britain and Russia worked hard to exploit this vacuum by trying to remould the existing organization of space there to suite their own geopolitical designs.

On the whole, Britain's approach towards the Persian organization of space in Central Asia, the Caucasus and in the Persian Gulf differed fundamentally from that of Russia. Russia in practice showed that in its rivalries with the British it preferred territorial expansionism and annexation of territories (in the Caucasus and Central Asia) which were dependencies of the waning Persian Empire. To do this, Russia entered wars either directly with the Iranian forces or with local forces of the outer dependencies of the Persian Empire. The Russians annexed these territories by signing agreements with Iranians at the end of each war and thereby officially and directly took them from Iran. In contrast, the British never acknowledged the fact that the territories it was meddling with in areas like Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf were dependencies of the Persian Empire. Hence they devised a complicated mechanism to deal with legal aspects of their Great Game with Russia on the chessboard of territories of the Persian Empire in Central Asia and Afghanistan. This mechanism allowed the British to argue a strange legal status for these territories whereby they were assumed to be independent of the Persian Empire, yet not independent on their own. They were treated more like no-man's land, but in practice, the British were fencing off the Iranians militarily or in legal arguments in every step of the way. In other words, by distorting the territorial history of the region, the British devised a history of their own for the region in which the legal dominion of the Safavid federation of Persia in Central Asia, Afghanistan and in the Persian Gulf was conveniently ignored. Instead, in the British

historical and legal arguments the Persian Federation's legal status in those territories was limited to the 'short lived and long gone' empire of Nader Shah Afshar.[1] By expressing such a view, not only did they openly display contempt for Nader Shah because of his Indian campaign before the British could make their own move there, but also they ignored the fact that Nader Shah's so-called short-lived and long-gone empire was only a dynastic change in the enduring Persian federation. In other words, Nader Shah's leadership of the Persian federation was simply a revival of that of the Safavids after a brief period of chaos that had befallen the latter. The peculiarly British way of looking at the history of territoriality in such areas as Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf served the British purpose at the time in pursuing the Great Game with the Russians in those territories and became the norm in the historical studies of the political geography of those areas. Not only have generations of British historians looked at those events from that distorted angle, but others who found themselves dependent on the British sources and documents for such studies have fallen in the same trap. Scholars even today assess the history of territoriality in and around Iran from this peculiar point of view, which was established by the agents of British imperial interests in the Great Game of the nineteenth century. Seldom have they paid attention to the crucial fact that agents of imperial Britain in the East who wrote on the history of the region or corresponded with London or Calcutta about matters related to politics of territoriality there were not impartial observers in these territorial games but were partial to British interests therein. An examination of masses of diplomatic correspondence stored in Foreign Office files at Public Record Office or India Office Library and Records – uniquely valuable as they are to the study of political history of West Asia – demonstrate the biased way in which Iran's territorial rights are argued. This is of course natural, as Britain had to act in favour of her protectorate of Afghanistan to the east of Iran, and in favour of her protectorate Arab states of the Persian Gulf to the south. Hence use of these documents or similar documents from any other country for that matter, without being critically treated may not amount to an academic approach.

In the Great Game, however, Russia preferred outright territorial expansionism and started to occupy and annex territories in Central Asia traditionally considered as parts of old Turkistan and Greater Khorasan of the Persian federation. This was the fulfilment of an old strategy dreamed by Peter the Great for gaining access to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf. They occupied Bokhara, Samarqand, Marv, Khiveh, Khojand, etc. in Central Asia and Greater Khorasan and turned them in the early twentieth century into the Soviet republics of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. These republics became independent in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The British saw these Russian undertakings in Central Asia as designed purely to facilitate Russia's

advance towards and interference in India, and it was this perception that gave rise to the Great Game. The British, in contrast, upped for the strategy of creating protectorates and buffer states as well as defining their territorial shape and boundary arrangements. It was in keeping with this strategy that the British created Afghanistan in 1863, by helping the ruler of Kabul to occupy Herat and Qandehar, and went on to fight three wars with it. Britain turned Afghanistan into its protectorate, then agreed to its independence and, by signing the 1907 treaty with Russia, divided Afghanistan together with Iran and Tibet into two northern and southern zones of influence between herself and Russia. Establishment of cooperation with Russia put an end to the Anglo-Russian Great Game of geopolitics in the East and thus Britain lost all interest in Afghanistan and left it to dwell in its problem of not having succeeded in being transformed into a nation in real sense of the word. While the peoples of Kabul, Herat and Qandehar were at war with the British, they behaved as a unified nation, but as they came out of the shadow of British colonial protection they started to argue along the dividing line of their conflicting tribal and ethnic identities. These divisive and bitter arguments receded temporarily during the Russian (Soviet) occupation of early 1980s, but resumed as soon as foreign occupation was overthrown. These same arguments continue to dog the region.

When speaking of '*nation building*' in Afghanistan during the war of 2001 against Taliban and al-Qaeda organizations, political leaders in the United States and Britain showed little awareness of the fact that Afghanistan was neither a nation in the beginning, nor has it ever been able to develop a sense of nationhood among tribes and ethnic groups of varying identities. The Pashtuns, the Hazarahs, the Uzbeks, the Tajiks and others are as divided today as they have always been. The land has always existed and the tribes have their separate histories, but the reality is that the tribes and territories which constituted the country of Afghanistan in the mid-nineteenth century belonged to three autonomous vassal kingdoms of Herat, Kabul, and Qandehar. Though these entities were, during recent history ruled by members of the same clan, the Abdalis, they failed to develop a sense of national cohesion among themselves. Thus, it is history that tells us to be aware that this patchwork of tribes and ethnic groups of conflicting identities can only survive as a unified country if a federative system is created for a multi-national or multi-ethnic state in which the tribes would have the opportunity of preserving their separate identities while enjoying equal rights in the federation.

From the point of view of political geography, Lord George Curzon of Kedleston, Viceroy of India in the late nineteenth century, and Colonel Hangerford Holdich, a prominent territorial administrator of British India, who made their mark on the evolution of the political map of Asia, were in favour of the so-called 'natural boundaries'. Both of them had made an immense impact on the formation of political geography of the

South, Central, and West Asia of today. Their concept of 'natural boundaries' was soon to be discredited for having disregarded the human dimension of boundary organization, but it was already too late in the case of Khorasan, Sistan and Baluchistan, where indigenous populations were divided between neighbouring states. The boundaries that divided these countries represented the geographical frontiers of the Great Game between Britain and Russia, the latter then perceived by the former as being in league with the Iranians against her interests in India. However unrealistic this perception may appear now, it was most serious at the time and British India had every reason to be anxious over the strategic sensitivities of the position of Iran and her dependencies in Afghanistan and Central Asia between the two superpowers of the time. The laxity and lack of political initiative which were the mark of the Qajar regime in Iran's largely diminished federative system, and Tehran's frequently signed but meaningless treaties with France and Russia, Britain's main rivals in global imperialism of the time, did little to eliminate British India's anxieties. This whole situation could have led to no other result but territorial contention between Britain and Russia in territories traditionally adhered to the Iranian federative system. The old and weakened territorial arrangement in that antiquated federation indeed worked as an added factor that elevated Anglo-Russian territorial contention in that part of the world and hastened the consequential territorial disintegration of Iran.

Britain's suspicions of a Russo-Iranian conspiracy against her position in India though was based on logical assumptions lead to a Russophobia in India that had far-reaching consequences, without being realistically founded. Time itself has proved that Iran was too weak and her leaders too ignorant of the geopolitical games of the time to contemplate involvement in acts of conspiracy with one giant neighbour against the other. Nevertheless, her weakness was indeed a matter of concern to the British. When it came to territorial disputes and boundary delimitation, these handicaps of the Iranian system demonstrated themselves in an unmistakable manner. While the Russians were pushing their boundaries with Iran further and further southward into the Iranian territories, Britain, in the words of Colonel Holdich (1901), designed Indian and Afghan boundaries with Iran only to suit British India.

Compared with general weakness of the central government of the Iranian federation and the fragility of ties between it and its peripheral dependencies, the frontier-keeping states in the peripheries played a major role in the defence of the realm of that federation. Not only did they safeguard their own power and influence, but by doing so, they brought Iran safely out of the chaos and disarray that had befallen it so often throughout its history. Fully equipped with the philosophy of Iranian political leadership, the peripheral amirdoms in Iran constantly strengthened their positions, waiting to take over the leadership of the country whenever weakness and decay in the

political centre triggered the process of disintegration of central power. This was the case of Nader Shah's accession in early 1830s, and his assassination in 1847 with consequent chaos in the land. Many leaders of regions and peripheral amirdoms, who had been loyal to Nader Shah, opted for the leadership of Iran. One of these was Amir Alam Khan I, the Khozeimeh Amir of Qaenat who almost succeeded in establishing the Khozeimeh dynasty as the new Shahs of Iran. He was murdered in 1749 before completing the task he had set for himself in fulfilling this ambition. His rivals divided Nader Shah's empire into two countries: Ahmad Shah Abdali (Dorrani) created the first monarchy in Afghanistan, whereas Mohammad Hassan Khan and his son Agha Mohammad Khan established the Qajar dynasty in the rest of Nader Shah's empire, the Iran of today. Their dynasty was replaced by the Pahlavi dynasty in 1924, which was, in turn, replaced by the Islamic republic in 1979.

This politically upward movement of the peripheral amirdoms had two prominent features. Firstly, it encouraged rivalries among them which always resulted in shaping and reshaping Iran's internal political structure on the lines of regional and ethnic inclinations. Secondly, the relative absence of regionalism of a separatist nature among the peripheral autonomies or frontier-keeping states. Before the introduction of European concepts of state and territoriality into the region, the peripheral states and frontier-keeping amirdoms of Iran adhered loyally to the force that had succeeded in taking over the leadership of the country. The Khozeimeh amirdom, particularly examined in this work, was a good example in this regard, and this was the secret of the survival of their amirdom throughout the ages. Writing on Colonel Pessian's uprising in 1921 and mediating role of Amir Shokat al-Molk II, Mehrdad Bahar observes: 'obeying the orders of the centre meant to him [Shokat al-Molk] as guarantee of continuation of the simple living standards of the people and of the survival of his own rule'.[2] In telegraph to Colonel Pessian the Amir himself asserts: 'what can I do? I consider myself as the obedient servant of the government, and therefore, cannot disobey government orders'. Evidently it made no difference to their loyalty to the centre whether it was in the hands of the Abbasid Arabs or the Mongolian Holaku Khan: the Safavid Seyyeds or Sunni Nader Shah; the Turkmen Qajars or Mazandarani Pahlavis – they were loyal to the centre.

In the Eastern peripheries of the Iranian (Persian) federation many such families and amirdoms can be singled out. Historically the more notable families of Taherids of Khorasan and Saffarids of Sistan waged wars on the Arab Caliphate of Baghdad. In more recent centuries, such families as the Keyanis, Hazarahs, Barakzais, Abdalis, Khalilis, Teimuris, Sarbandis, Shahrakis, Kalalis, Naruis, Sheibanis, Sanjaranis and so on, have each played a role of consequence in shaping political geography and history of the South and Central Asian borderlands. Some of them, like Tekkeh Turkmens significantly influenced the shaping of territorial and boundary arrangements between Iran

and Russia. But no one has influenced the political geography of these border areas as significantly as did the Khozeimeh amirdom. In the nineteenth century they became entangled in the web of Anglo-Russian rivalries in Asia and unintentionally assumed the role of the smaller players in the Great Game. Their territorial and political rivalries with the tribes and amirs of western Afghanistan have been a dominant factor in determining the present boundaries between Iran and Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The impact of the role of Khozeimeh amirs directly influenced boundary delimitation in favour of Iran at least in three segments of Eastern Iranian boundaries. These are:

1 In Sistan, the role that was played by Amir Alam Khan III, Heshmat al-Molk made the British arbitrator take his power and influence in that region into consideration. The arbitrator wrote to his government, advising them 'of the great power of the Ameer of Kain and his refusal of discussing present possessions'.[3] It was based on this advice that the government in India informed the British officer accompanying the Afghan Commissioner that 'Persia holds chief part of Sistan so firmly that arbitral opinion must be in favour of Persia'.[4] The arbitration commission, as a result of Amir Alam Khan's display of power and influence in loyalty to Iran resolved that Sistan should be divided between Afghanistan and Iran instead of being handed over to the Afghans in its entirety.
2 Baluchistan boundary arbitration of 1895 included the district of Mirjaveh (an obvious Iranian possession) in the Kalat (now Pakistan) territory. The decision was protested to by the Iranians, but to no avail. Rivalries in the Anglo-Russian Great Game in eastern Iran intensified to the level that Britain felt its prestige in the region would be 'gravely injured if the Russians succeeded in securing dismissal [of Amir Ali Akbar Khan Khozeimeh] from the governorship of Sistan'.[5] The Russians were apparently conspiring with the authorities in Tehran to dismiss the Amir for having protected British lives and property in a disturbance which was allegedly instigated by Russian agents against British diplomatic mission in Sistan in July 1903. The British found it necessary to come to a compromise with the Iranians whereby the Khozeimeh Amir would be spared in return for Mirjaveh boundary adjustment in favour of Iran. Thus, they agreed in March 1905 to recognize Mirjaveh district as an actual Iranian possession, in return for 'concessions in Sistan', namely retaining Amir Ali Akbar Khan Khzeimeh in power as the hereditary governor of that province. This was very important to the Iranians as they were extremely unhappy to lose Mirjaveh – a district connecting the northern section of Baluchistan boundaries with the southern sections of Sistan boundaries in a stretch of about 300 miles – in an earlier British boundary arbitration.

3 When Turkish arbitration was determining Yazdan district of southern sections of Khorasan's boundaries with Afghanistan in 1935, the land and water holdings of Amir Masum Khan Hesam ad-Doleh, Amir Mohammad Reza Khan and Amir Hussein Khan Khozeime Alam were so strongly in evidence that the arbitrator could not disregard them. The boundary line in Yazdan district was, consequently, drawn in a delta shape to include that district within Iranian territories.

Moreover, the Khozeimeh family's strong attachment to the region and their dedication to its development stemming from their immediate political and economic interests in those borderlands, together with their knowledge of and influence in that region were considered by the central government of Iran as an asset. Hence on many occasions members of the family were assigned to negotiate with the Afghans or others for border settlement. Amir Shokat al-Molk II's mission of 1930 in Kabul and Amir Hussein Khan Khzeime Alam's mission of 1956 in Washington are notable examples of this. Similarly, whenever Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the last Shah of Iran, dealt with matters of boundary and water issues with the Afghans, he consulted his close confidant Prime Minister Amir Asadollah Alam, son of Shokat al-Molk II. In 1969 for instance, when the Shah decided to have direct dialogue with Afghan leaders, he chose Amir Asadollah Alam then a powerful court minister, to carry out confidential negotiations with the Afghan Prime Minister.[6]

These instances of the Khozeimeh Amirs' power and influence directly affected the evolution of the political geography of areas of the Great Game. Meanwhile, these are manifestations of the impact of the role of peripheral autonomies in safeguarding territorial integrity of Iran in difficult circumstances. The Khozeimeh family's concerns with farming and irrigation gave them the necessary local attachment and economic incentive to fight for the maximum portion of territory and above all water supply in their region. In so far as these local family interests coincided closely with national policies, Iran benefited from the activities of its regional elite and peripheral autonomies. Whenever local advice, *inter alia* from the Khozeimeh, was ignored by the central authority, especially in the face of the Anglo-Russian interference, national interests were also badly served, as is illustrated by the continuing border problems in Sistan and adjacent territories. Whereas these peripheral autonomies performed successfully their role in defending Iran's territorial integrity within their immediate jurisdiction, the weakness of Iran's central authority often had the opposite result.

Boundary arrangements imposed on Iran by the British and Russians have resulted in loss of many territories traditionally belonging to Iran, in some cases in actual Iranian possession. This was mainly due to two factors: firstly the waning Persian Empire was unwittingly subjected to the consequences of the Great Game of geopolitics between British and Russian empires played

out in territories traditionally belonging to Iran. Secondly, the Russian southward strategic push and British India's strategic need for creating an Afghan buffer state and for pushing the Afghan and British Indian frontiers with Iran in Baluchistan and Sistan as far west as it was possible.

The decline of Iran's power began with the imposition upon Iran of the two treaties of Golestan (1813) and Turkmanchai (1828), which not only ceded to Russia a number of Iran's northwestern provinces, but also allowed Russian involvement in Iran's domestic affairs. This political decline together with the incompetence of the administration and the irresponsible manner in which the Shah and his ministers conducted the affairs of the state resulted in further loss of territories all around Iran. At least ten new countries, including modern Iran, have emerged out of the territorial disintegration of the Persian Empire, whereas a combination of territories grabbed from that empire and other territories gave birth to more new countries like Pakistan.

More territories were lost through boundary delimitation processes with the neighbours. Naser ad-Din Shah for instance, presented the Hashtadan Plain to the Afghans out of his 'feeling of friendship towards British government';, an incomprehensible generosity that gave Russia and France the impression that Iranian territories were up for grabs. The extent of Tehran's ignorance in matters of such magnitude as maintaining territorial integrity of the country, which delighted agents of imperial powers dealing with Iranian territories. The British minister in Tehran for instance, reported to his government that 'happily the Persian Foreign Office is exceedingly ignorant both of the course of former correspondence and of the situation on the frontier' (H. B. Durand to Marquis of Salisbury, 20th January 1896, FO 60/627).

These are all matters of the past and demand no regret even from the Iranians, who are content with the territorial limits they live within. It is over two centuries since they have declared war on any of their neighbours, and they no longer claim any territory from others. Unlike its Iraqi neighbours who waged two wars in the 1980s and 1990s on Iran and Kuwait in pursuit of territorial claims, Iran withdrew her age-old claims on Bahrain in 1970. But looking to the future, however, there are areas of concern stemming from the way some of these boundaries have been drawn. In many cases the boundaries imposed upon Iran partition districts of the same characteristics with people of the same ethnic origin. This situation is more pronounced in Sistan, where Hirmand waters are vital to the existence of the Sistani population on both sides. Afghanistan's treatment of this issue has been ambiguous: accepting that Hirmand is an international river between her and Iran on the one hand, and her refusal to abide by the international regulations governing such rivers on the other. In fact, Hirmand water disputes have never ceased to keep Iran and Afghanistan apart.

In her long efforts to settle this problem Iran rarely faced the Afghans themselves. Iran had to deal with the British protectors of Afghanistan in the beginning, whose role was, to some extent, replaced by that of the Americans

in the 1940s who constructed many dams and diversion canals on the Hirmand River. From the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century Afghanistan gradually went under the influence of the Soviet Union until it was occupied by the Soviets in 1980. This event in turn led to civil war and the creation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan under the influence of Pakistan, which in turn resulted in the American invasion of 2001 and continuation of civil war. Two gaps appeared in the duration of foreign influence in Afghanistan:

1 In the 1930s Afghanistan was free of British protection and had not as yet gone under US influence. This period coincided with the rise in Iran's power under Reza Shah Pahlavi, whose government succeeded in concluding the 1939 agreement with the Afghans, whereby Hirmand water was divided equally between the two countries. Yet Afghanistan failed to comply with the terms of this treaty.
2 In 1960s and early 1970s Afghanistan was free from foreign influence for the second time. Although Soviet influence was on the increase, Soviet agents had not as yet been in control of Afghan foreign relations. This period too coincided with Iran's growing power and influence in the region. Yet, Iran's approach to border problems with Afghanistan appears strangely weak and almost incomprehensible. Notwithstanding the fact that by concluding the 1939 treaty, 50 per cent of Hirmand water reaching delta region belonged to Iran, Tehran's representatives settled for the 1973 agreement with the Afghans which gave Iran the meager 26 cubic metres per second of Hirmand water, which is substantially less than Sistan's needs.

In search of justifiable reasons for Iran's consent to such an agreement in respect of Hirmand water, this author questioned several members of Iran's government of the time. Among them Dr Ali-Naghi Alikhani asserted on Sunday 4th April 1992 that:

> . . . the Shah's government was increasingly agitated by the prospect of Soviet domination of Afghanistan. This could bring that hostile super-power as close to the Strait of Hormuz, frequently referred to by the Shah as the 'jugular vein of Iran and the West' as 300 miles. To avoid this, Tehran committed itself to a policy of moving Afghanistan away from the Soviet influence to the Western camp under Iranian influence. Hence, not only did Iran give Afghanistan financial and economic assistance and granted her road links to the Persian Gulf, but also moderated her demands in border disputes with that country.

This view is supported by a number of assertions in Amir Asadollah Alam's

book of memoirs and is in keeping with Iran's regional role in the 1970s. Should this view stand and be accepted as the main reason for moderating Iran's demand for full share of the Hirmand water to the level of 1973 treaty, Tehran must have hoped to replace that agreement with a more realistic one at a future date.

Iran's relations with Afghanistan in the post-Taliban era seem to have started on a good and correct basis; that is, non-interference and cooperation. Yet, Hirmand water will continue to effect these relations unless the two nations decide to negotiate sincerely all aspects of the issue in search of a realistic solution to the problem.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Peter Louis Templeton, *The Persian Prince*, Persian Prince Publications, London 1979, p. 11.

2 For more on Khozeimeh amirdom, see: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Amirs of the Borderlands and Eastern Iranian Borders*, Urosevic Research Foundation, London 1996.

3 Turan is an ancient Persian term for most areas of Central Asia known in medieval times as Turkistan. The western periphery of this area has always been known as Khorasan. Khorasan is considered the birthplace of the concept of *Aryana* or lands of the Arayans. This term gradually evolved into Iran. Those Afghanologists who allege that Aryana was a term in reference to the lands now constituting Afghanistan, overlook the fact that the term in reference to the lands of Aryans was *Iran* and it precisely means the land of Aryans. However, Prophet Zoroaster (about 1000 years BC) whose teachings form the essence of what was to become *Iran* propagated his religion originally in the lands of Khorasan. Traditionally Zoroaster is believed to have converted legendary king Goshtaseb of *Shahnameh's* Iran, at Balkh in Central Asia in 588 BC, but some scholars locate the event earlier and elsewhere, perhaps around 1000 BC and at Herat or in Khwarezm. Both these localities are in Central Asia, the ancient Khorasan (comprising Central Asia and Afghanistan as well as Iran's present province of Khorasan). The geographical expanse in question stretched from the Caspian Sea to the western provinces of China. It included both desert and highlands, with the fertile Farghanah valley at its centre. This stretch of land has been occupied by peoples of nomadic traditions speaking in Persian or Turkish dialects. Among its historic centres are Bokhara, Samarqand, Balkh, Marv and Tashkent, most on the ancient caravan trail known as the Silk Road. The western half came under Iranian control as from sixth century BC, Moslem dynasties of Turko-Iranian origin controlled the area – by then known as Khorasan – from seventh century AD. Iranian control of western half was restored in sixteenth century AD and Russian control of the area began in the eighteenth century. The eastern half was contested between the Chinese empires and various nomadic peoples, such as the Mongols and the Khojahs.

4 L. D. Kristof, *The Nature of Frontiers and Boundaries*', in Annals of the Association of American Geographers, No. 49, 1959, pp. 269–82.

5 Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography*, 2nd edn, Longman Scientific & Technical, London 1989, pp. 144–6.

6 Hakim Abul-Qassem Ferdosi, *The Shahnameh*, English translation by Arthur G. Warner and Edward Warner, London 1925, Vol. VIII, pp. 92, 160–1, 164.

7 Abul-Hassan Ali Ibn-e Hussein Masudi, (Arab geographer/historian of the fourth century AH), *Moravej oz-Zahab* (*Propagating the Way*), Persian translation by Abul-Qassem Payandeh, Bongah-e Tarjomeh va Nashr-e Ketab, Tehran 1977, pp. 464–5.
8 Masudi, op. cit., p. 467.
9 Text of General MacLean's notes on his interview with Naser ad-Din Shah of Iran, FO 60/538, pp. 1–2 of 158. General MacLean was British arbitrator of Iran–Afghanistan boundaries from 1888 to 1890.

1 THE GREAT GAME AND ITS MAJOR PLAYERS

1 J. A. Agnew and G. O'Tuathail, *The Historiography of American Geopolitics* (paper presented at ISA conference), Washington DC, April 1987.
2 Professor Jean Gottmann, whose student this author was at Oxford in late 1970s, authorized this quotation from his letter in a separate note dated 19th May 1992.
3 Peter J. Taylor, *Political Geography*, Longman Scientific & Technical, 2nd edn., London 1989, p. 7.
4 For more on the historical account of the development of world order see, Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh (Persian text), *Joghrafiaye Siasi va Siasat-e Joghrafiaey* (*Political Geography and Geographical Politics*), Entesharat SAMT, Tehran 2002.
5 Lord George N. Curzon, as quoted by Anthony Verrier in his: *Francis Younghusband and the Great Gam*', Jonathan Cape, London 1991, p. 1.
6 M. E. Yapp, *The Making of Modern Near East 1792–1923*, Longman, London and New York 1987, p. 72.
7 Ibid.
8 The term amirdom or emirate of Afghanistan was revived by the Taliban regime of Afghanistan in late 1990s, seemingly to revive that country's medieval status as a 'God given' religious regime. The reality that the Talibans have failed to appreciate is that the so-called God given state created by Ahmad Shah *Dorrani* was a Kingdom within the ancient Persian concept of secular monarchy akin to that which existed in Iran itself. The Afghan kingdom that Amir Dust Mohammad Khan Abdali revived was philosophically based on the same concept, except that as British proteges Dust Mohammad and his son Shir Ali did not see their monarchy as yet a fully-grown 'state'. This was the reason that they preferred their secular monarchy to be referred to as the amirdom or emirate of Afghanistan. Taking this background into consideration, it is obvious that the Taliban's move to reduce the status of the 'independent state of Afghanistan' into the 'emirate' of Afghanistan was motivated by a kind of self-serving religious interpretation of the term state. It is not therefore motivated by historical realities related to the amirdom of Afghanistan of nineteenth century.
9 Anthony Verrier, *Francis Younghusband and the Great Game*, Jonathan Cape, London 1991, p. 24.
10 Ibid., p. 23.
11 Ibid., p. 11.
12 For more on Lord Curzon's agent 'Francis Younghusband' and his role in the Great Game, see: Verrier op. cit.
13 Microsoft, *Encarta Encyclopedia 99*, 1993–1998 Microsoft Corporation, 'British Empire', p. 1.
14 For more on Sir Percy M. Sykes's view on geopolitical aspects of the will of Peter the Great see: *A History of Persia*, two vols, London 1915 and 1922.
15 The text of clauses IX and XIII of Peter the Great's will is here adopted from. Sir Arnold T. Wilson, *The Persian Gulf*, (quoting from Sykes's, *History of Persia*, p. 245f.), George Allen & Unwin Ltd., second impression, London 1954, pp. 171–2f.

16 *Khanat* is a Persian plural, composed of a Mongolian term *khan*, which means 'chief' and the Arabic plural suffix *at*. Though the two together do not make a plural in either Mongolian or Arabic, together they make sense in Turkic Persian used extensively in Central Asia. The amalgamation of these two in Persian represents a plural in reference to the vassal kingdoms of the region, which were dependencies of the Persian Empire from the beginning until its demise in the early twentieth century.
17 'Amu Darya' is a local name for the ancient *river* Oxus, the Persian form of which is *river* Jeyhun. '*Darya*' is also a Persian term for 'sea'. In the areas of Greater Khorasan (Central Asia and Afghanistan) this term is used in reference to large rivers.
18 AH represents the Islamic calendar and is short for 'After Hijrah', that is, after the date of the religious migration of the prophet of Islam from Mecca to Medina in AD 621.
19 *Persian Frontiers*, an official document of British Foreign Office, Confidential 17188, FO 371/45507, p. 7.
20 George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, two vols, Longman, Green & Co. London 1892, reprinted by Frank Cass, London 1966, pp. 135–6.
21 For more on this see: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Amirs of the Borderlands and Eastern Iranian Borders*, Urosevic Research Foundation, London 1996, pp. 315, 321.
22 FO 65/991, enclosure in Thomson's No. 10, dated 29th January 1873.
23 Ibid., Thomson's No. 21, dated 7th February 1870.
24 Munnawwar Khan, *Anglo-Afghan Relations, The Great Game in Central Asia*, published in Peshawar (Pakistan) 1964, p. 249.
25 For more on this subject see: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Amirs. . .,* op. cit., the 'Conclusion', pp. 465–82.
26 FO 65/991, Loftus's No. 147, dated 5th April 1873; No. 150, 16th April 1873; No. 157, 23rd April 1873. Also, Thomson's No. 30, dated 16th March 1873. See also the letter of the Russian minister in Tehran to the Persian Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 13th April 1875, FO 65/878.
27 FO 65/904, Confidential from Lord Derby to Lotus, dated 6th November 1874.
28 FO 65/991, Confidential from Derby to Thomson, dated January 1875.
29 FO 65/991, Confidential from Loftus to Derby, dated 2nd September 1875.
30 FO 65/927, Despatch from Thomson, dated 7th March 1875.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
33 Syr Darya is a local name for the ancient river Jaxartes, the Persian form of which is *river* Seyhun.
34 FO 371/4550t, dated 31st January 1947, p. 8.
35 In article I of this treaty the government of Soviet Union declared 'the whole body of treaties and conventions concluded with Persia by the Tsarist government, which crushed the right of the Persian people, to be null and void'.
36 The word 'fleet' is given here, as it is the equivalent of the word 'Flot', which was used in the original Russian text of the treaty. The Iranian delegate to the League of Nations communicated to that body a French translation of the treaty in which 'Flot' was erroneously rendered as 'bateaux' (see League of Nations, Treaty Series, Volume IX, Page 406). The English version of the treaty in the British State papers was translated from this French text, and consequently gave *vessels* as the equivalent of *bateauz* (see Volume CXIV, Page 904). The matter is rendered perfectly plain by a reference to article VIII of the treaty of Turkmanchai. The first paragraph of that article states that Iranian merchant ships were to enjoy the same rights of navigation on the Caspian Sea as Russian merchant ships, while the second paragraph contained the prohibition in regard to the maintenance of Iranian warships on that sea.

37 This part of the treaty of Friendship of 1921 was never practised by Iran as the Soviet Union, for as long as it lived, did not allow Iran to maintain a naval fleet in the Caspian Sea or to assume a military role therein.
38 FO 371/45507, Confidential on Persian Frontiers, 31st January 1947, p. 9.
39 Russian measure of length, about 1.1 kilometres (0.66 miles) from Russian *versta*.
40 E 4067/100/34, Meshed dispatch No T/24, dated 20th May 1926. Repeated in FO 371/45507, p. 9.
41 Hari-Rud is known as 'Tajan' below its junction with Kashaf-Rud.
42 E8126, No. 676/6/45, From British Embassy, Tehran to the Foreign Office, London, dated 27th October 1945.
43 E2211/100/34 Persia, despatch No. 229, from Sir R. Hodgson to the Foreign Office, dated 19th March 1926. Repeated in FO 371/45507.
44 Leonard Shapiro, *Soviet Treaty Series, 1917–1928*, Vol. 1, Georgetown University Press, Washington DC 1950, p. 315.
45 Ibid. p. 314.
46 FO 371/82332A, Confidential No. 514, dated 22nd June 1950.
47 FO 371/82332A, Confidential from British Embassy in Tehran to Foreign Office in London, dated 12th June 1950.
48 *Ettelaat* daily of Tehran, dated 15th November 1976.
49 For more on conceptual discrepancies between Roman 'empire' and Persian 'shahanshahi' see: Ahmad Tavakoli, *Empratouri, Shahanshahi* (*Empire*, *Shahanshi*), in Persian, *Ayandeh* monthly, Vol. IXX, Nos. 7–9, Tehran 1372 (1993), pp. 828–30.
50 Peter Louis Templeton, *The Persian Prince* Persian Prince Publications, London 1979, p. 14.
51 L. Lockhart, *Persia as seen in the West*, in A. J. Arberry's *The Legacy of Persia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1953, p. 326.
52 A plate of bronze or other metals is called *jam* in Persian. Similarly a goblet of metal or crystal is *jam*. On the other hand, Shahnameh of Ferdosi speaks of legendary Jamshid Shah, founder of Iran, who had a *jam* showing the world. From this concept comes the mystical crystal ball in almost all cultures. Yet, this author is of opinion that Jamshid Shah was none other than Daruis the Great who had the *jam* showing the map of the civilized world. There are other reasons supporting this theory, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this book.
53 For more details on these developments under the Achaemenids, see: A. J. Arberry, *The Legacy of Persia*, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1953.
54 Pio Fillipani-Ronconi, *The Tradition of Sacred Kingship in Iran*, in George Lenczwski ed., *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Hoover Institute, 1978, pp. 51–2.
55 Georgina Hermann, *The Iranian Revival*, one of *The Making of the Past* series of books, Elsevier International, Oxford 1977, p. 120.
56 For more on the subject see: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Joghrafiay-e Tarikhi-e Khalij-e Fars* (*Historical Geography of the Persian Gulf*), Tehran University Press No. 1492, Tehran 1975, pp. 10–11.
57 Hakim Abul-Qassem Ferdosi, *The Shahnameh*, English Translation by Arthur G. Warner and Edward Warner, London 1925, Vol. VIII, pp. 92, 160, 161 and 164.
58 Georgina Herrmann, op. cit., p. 122.
59 Here Fillipani-Ronconi cites F. Pareja, *Islamologia I*, p. 111–13.
60 Pio Fillipani-Ronconi, *The Tradition of Sacred Kingship in Iran*, in George Lenczowski's *Iran Under the Pahlavis*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford University, 1978, p. 67.
61 Most probably 'Asjodi' or 'Asjadi' is meant by this name.
62 Pio Fillipani-Ronconi, op. cit., p. 77.

63 For more details, see: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Iran va Irani Budan* (*Iran and to be Iranian*), a two-part article in *Ettelaat Siasi-Eqtesadi* (*Ettelaat Political-Economic*), Nos. 147–8 & 149–50, Azar-Dey & Bahman-Esfand 1378 (winter of 1999–2000), pp. 21–2 of the first part.
64 Phillipani-Ronconi, *The Tradition of Sacred Kingship*, op. cit., p. 78.
65 For more on this see: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *The Amirs of the Borderlands and Eastern Iranian Borders*, Urosevic Foundation Publication, London 1995, Chapter IV; 'The Partitioning of Khorasan', pp. 263–310.
66 Modern city of Gorgan.
67 Captain G. H. Hunt, *The Persian Campaign*, Otram & Havilock's, London 1858, p. 92.
68 *Persian Frontiers*, an official document of British Foreign Office, Confidential 17188, FO 371/45507, p. 7.
69 N. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers (The Last Testament)*, translated into English and edited by Strobe Talbot, London 1974, p. 298.
70 'The Echo of Iran', *New Republics – Problems of Recognition*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 12 (47), December 1991, p. 6.
71 Ettelaat International, *Iran signs trilateral Agreement with Turkmenistan and Armenia*, No. 246, London, Tuesday 6th June 1995, p. 10.
72 Ibid.
73 Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Geopolitics and Reform under Khatami* (A Geopolitical Look at the Foundations of Reforms in Iran', *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 3, Nos 2–3, spring/summer 2001, Nicosia (Cyprus).

2 SMALL PLAYERS

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2 Abbas Khalili, *Iran Va Eslam* (*Iran and Islam*), Persian text, two vols, Tehran 1957, Vol. 2, pp. 187 – 8.
3 Khalili, op. cit., p. 211.
4 Ibid., p. 190.
5 Ibid., p. 220.
6 Ibid., pp. 220–1.
7 Mohammad Jarir Tabari, *Tarikh-e Tabari* (*Tabari History*), 11 vols, translated into Persian by Abol-Qassem Payandeh, Vol. XI, Bongah-e Tarjomeh va Nashr-e Ketab, Tehran 1974, pp. 4671–2.
8 Sirhan bin Sa'id, *Kashf al-Ghemmah*, partially translated into English by E. C. Ross from local Arabic manuscript and published in F. Asiatic Soc. Bengal. 43 (1874), III–96 as *Annals of Oman*.
9 See *Tarikh-e Tabari*, op. cit., Vol. VIII, pp. 3279–84.
10 *Tarikh-e Tabari*, op. cit., Vol. VII, p. 3087.
11 On the Khozeimeh amirs' devotion to Shi'ite Islam, it is noteworthy that all amirs of the modern generation of this family (from Amir Esmail Khan (1792) to Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-mol II and his son, Amir Assadollah Alam), have been entombed in their private mausoleum inside the shrine of Imam Reza, the holiest Shi'ite shrine in Iran.
12 Haj Sheikh Mohammad Hussein Ayati, *Baharestan*, Tehran 1948, p. 109.
13 Ali-Asghar Hekmat, *Yek Gentleman-e Tamam Ayar* ('A Perfect Gentleman'), in Mohammad-Ali Monsef's book *Amir Shokat al-Molk Alam, Amir-e Qaen*, Tehran 1975, p. 290.
14 Taher defeated Caliph Amin Abbasid and replaced him by his brother Mamun or-Rashid in AD 813.

15 Bahram Chubin, according to *Tarikh-e Tabari*, was a noble general, rivaling Khosro Parviz, trying to assume the Sassanid throne from the latter (see *Tarikh-e Tabri*, Vol. II, pp. 728–37).
16 Major Percy Sykes, *Ten thousand Miles in Persia*, John Murray, London 1902, p. 399.
17 *Tarikh-e Tabari*, op. cit., Vol. XIII, p. 5556.
18 *Tarikh-e Tabari*, op. cit., pp. 5557–8
19 Major Bersford Lovet, *Journey in Baluchistan* in Major-General Goldsmid, *Eastern Persia*, Vol. II, Macmillan, London 1876, p. 341, footnote.
20 Captain J. B. D. Hunter, Her Britannic Majesty's Consulate at Sistan, *Consular Report*, dated 19th August 1912, 3, FO 248/971.
21 Marco Polo as quoted in Guy Le Strange, *Lands of Eastern Caliphate*, London 1960, p. 352.
22 Haj Soltan-Hussein Tabandeh, *Tarikh Va Joghrafiay-e Gonabad* (*History and Geography of Gonabad*), Tehran University Press 1969, p. 12.
23 It is recorded that Khajeh Nasir od-Din Tusi enticed Holaku Khan to overthrow the Caliphate of Baghdad by suffocating Caliph Al-Mostasam Bellah while he was wrapped in a rug, in order to prevent the Caliph's blood being shed on the ground which would otherwise, according to a tradition of the time, destroy the heavens and earth. This was done in AD 1258.
24 'Saheb', in this instance, means owner or governor.
25 '*Nayeb*' or '*nayeb os-saltaneh*' in the Safavid political organization of the country was a deputy representing the Shah in various districts, or ruled in different districts on behalf of the Shah.
26 '*Laleh*' was a title for the statesmen who were sent to various parts as guardians to the minor *nayebs* who would normally be selected from among the Safavid princes, usually remaining in the capital.
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28 Klaus-Michael Rohrborn *Provinzen und Zentralgewalt Persiens im 16 und 17 Jahrhundert*, trans. into Persian by K. Jahandari, Tehran 1978., op. cit., p. 125.
29 Ibid.
30 Rohrborn, op. cit., p. 65.
31 Ibid.
32 Rohrborn, op. cit., p. 126.
33 Mohammad-Ali Monsef, *Amir Shokat al-Molk Amir-e Qaen*, Tehran 1975, p. 100.
34 Ibid.
35 F. Hale, *From Persian Uplands*, London, no publication date, pp. 100–1.
36 K. S. McLachlan, *The Neglected Garden*, I. B. Tauris, London 1988, p. 124.
37 Sir Claremont Skrine, *World War in Iran*, London 1962, p. 100.
38 McLachlan, op. cit., p. 124.
39 Ibid., p. 101.
40 Ibid., p. 152.
41 Ibid., pp. 88–9.
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43 Ibid.
44 Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Yate, *Khorasan and Sistan*, William Blackwood & Son, London 1900, p. 78.
45 Colonel Jahangir Qaem-Maqami, *Yeksad-o Panjah Sanad-e Tarikhi* (*150 Historical Documents*), Tehran 1969, p. 236.
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47 Yate, op. cit., p. 78.
48 Hale, op. cit., p. 151.

49 Major Euan Smith, *Perso-Baluch Frontier*, in Goldsmid's *Eastern Persia*, Vol. II, London 1876, p. 337.
50 *Jahangoshay-e Naderi*, as quoted in Ayati's '*Baharestan*', op. cit., p. 110.
51 Ibid., p. 114.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid., p. 116.
54 Malek ash-Sho'ara Bahar ed. *Mojmal at-Tavarikh Golestaneh*, as quoted in Ayati's *Baharestan*, op. cit., pp. 116–7.
55 Ayati, op. cit., p. 118.
56 Ibid.
57 Ayati, op. cit., p. 120.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.
60 *Mojmal at-Tavarikh Golestaneh*, as quoted in Ayati's *Baharestan*, op. cit., p. 120.
61 Coins are reported to have been found in some households of Khorasan and Tehran with Amir Alam Khan's insignia as lord sovereign.
62 Ayati, op. cit., p. 121.
63 *Mojmal at-Tavarikh-e Golestaneh*, as quoted in Ayati's *Baharestan*, op. cit., pp. 121–2.
64 Ganda Sing, *Ahmad Shah Dorrani*, Bombay 1959, pp. 57–8.
65 General Joseph Pierre Ferrier, *Caravan Journey and Wandering in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkistan and Baloochistan*, London, William Clawes & Sons, 1857, pp. 508–9.
66 Sir Percy Sykes, *A History of Afghanistan*, London 1940, Vol. I, p. 356.
67 *Farman* of Ahmad Shah Dorrani, as it appears in the *Farhang-e Iran-Zamin*, Persian journal, Tehran 1958 (1337 AH), pp. 161–3.
68 This name appears in some English books of history of the region as 'Nun'.
69 Ganda Sing, op. cit., p. 88.
70 Ayati, op. cit., p. 122.
71 *Tarikh-e Guiti-gosha*, as quoted in Ayati's *Baharestan*, op. cit., p. 123.
72 Sir John Malcolm G.C.B./K.L.S., *History of Persia*, two vols, London 1829, Vol. II, p. 237.
73 Ayati, op. cit., p. 123.
74 Ibid., p. 125.
75 Qaem Maqam Farahani, *Monsha'at-e Qaem-Maqam* (*The Writings of Qaem-Maqam*), edited by Jahangir Qaem-Maqami, Tehran 1337 (1958), p. 163. The letter is dated 18th Rabi ol-Avval 1248 (1832).
76 Ayati, op. cit., p. 125.
77 Ibid.
78 'Aba-Abdollah' (Father of Abdollah) is one of the nicknames of Imam Hussein (peace by upon him).
79 Ayati, op. cit., p. 125–7.
80 Ibid., p. 127–8.
81 Ibid., p. 128.
82 Ibid.
83 Ali-Naghi Hakim al-Molk, *Rouznameh-e Safar-e Khorasan* (*The Itinerary of the Journey to Khorasan*) (1872), Tehran 1356 (1977), p. 476.
84 Major-General F. Goldsmid, *Eastern Persia*, two vols, Macmillan, London 1876, Vol. II, p. 335.
85 Goldsmid, op. cit., p. 267.
86 Ibid., p. 266.
87 Ibid., p. 268.
88 Ibid., p. 271.
89 Ibid., p. 330.

90 Ibid., p. 269.
91 Sykes, op. cit., p. 368.
92 Goldsmid, op. cit., pp. 267–8.
93 Ibid., Vol. I.
94 Mirza Masum Khan's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Document 93rd of the *Yeksad Sanad-e Tarikhi* (*100 Historical Documents*), edited by Ebrahim Safaei, Tehran 1974.
95 Sir Percy Sykes, op. cit.
96 Ayati, op. cit., p. 129.
97 'Imam Hussein' is correct.
98 Goldsmid, op. cit., p. 335.
99 Ibid., p. 334.
100 Ibid., p. 335.
101 Ayati, op. cit., p. 130.
102 Goldsmid, op. cit., p. 335.
103 Mohammad-Ali Monsef, author of *Shokat al-Molk Alam Amir-e Qaen* was the grandson of this *mostofi*.
104 Yate, *Khorasan and Sistan*, op. cit., p. 66.
105 Yate, op. cit., p. 67.
106 Ibid., p. 69.
107 Goldsmid, op. cit., p. 334.
108 Hale, *From Persian Uplands*, op. cit., pp. 45–6.
109 For more details see: Dr Mehrdad Bahar, *Dar Bareh-e Qiam-e Jandarmery-e Khorasan* (*On the Uprising of Khorasan* Gendarmerie), Tehran 1990, section on documentation.
110 Ayati, op. cit., p. 137.
111 Mohammad Ebrahim Bastani-Parizi, *Az Sir ta Piaz* (*From Garlic to Onion*), Tehran 1989, p. 553.
112 Ayati, op. cit., p. 136.
113 Khozeime, without 'H' at the end.
114 Skrine, *World War in Iran*, op. cit., pp. 100–1.
115 Skrine, op. cit., pp. 100, 214.
116 Monsef, op. cit., pp. 56–7.
117 Sykes, op. cit., pp. 374, 376.
118 Yate, op. cit., pp. 76–7.
119 Sykes, op. cit., p. 376.
120 Hale, op. cit., pp. 102–3.
121 Ayati. op. cit., p. 138.
122 Ibid., p. 140.

3 KHOZEIMEH FOREIGN RELATIONS

1 For details of this event, see previous chapter, section on Amir Alam Khan I.
2 H. W. Bellow, *From the Indus to the Tigris*, 1873, reprint 1977, Karachi, p. 305.
3 Bellow, op. cit., p. 306.
4 Ibid.
5 From H. S. Barnes, Secretary to the government of India in the Foreign Department, to His Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at the Court of Persia, Tehran, No. 1291 F., Dated Simla, 29th May 1901, FO 60/636.
6 See previous chapter.
7 From Barnes to the British Envoy in Tehran, op. cit.
8 From Major G. Chenevix Trench, Consul General – Meshed, to Foreign Secretary Simla, 31st May 1901, FO 60/636.

9 From H. B. M.'s Acting Consul General in Meshed, to H. B. M.'s Minister, Tehran, Telegram No. 22, dated 17th February 1903, FO 248/789.
10 Ibid.
11 From Diary No. 5 of H. B. M.'s Consul, Sistan and Kain, for Period 1st to 15th March 1903, FO 248/789.
12 Sistan Diary, dated 16th April 1903, by R.A.E. Benn, British Consul in Sistan, FO 248/789.
13 Ibid.
14 Sistan Diary No. 10, of Major Benn, H. B. M.'s Consul in Sistan and Kain, dated 16th to 31st March 1903, FO 248/789.
15 Translation of report sent by Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, to his agent in Tehran, to be presented to the Shah, dated 17th April 1903.
16 Sistan Diary No. 10, dated 16–13 [*sic*], May 1903, FO 248/789.
17 Notes by Major R. A. E. Benn, Consul for Sistan, dated 31st May 1903, FO 248/789.
18 Mons. Naus was a Belgian national at the service of the Iranian government, in charge of organizing the country's Custom services.
19 From H. Dobbs Esq., H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan, to the Secretary to the government of India in the F.D., No. 278, dated 18th June 1903, FO 248/789.
20 From Mr Dobbs, to the government of India, dated Nasratabad, 18th June 1903, FO 248/789.
21 Ibid.
22 H. Dobbs, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan, to the Secretary to the government of India in the F.D., No. c.4, dated Camp Bunjar, 7th July 1903, Confidential, FO 248/789.
23 Ibid.
24 From H. Dobbs, to the government of India, Camp Bunjar, 7th July 1903, FO 248/790.
25 Ibid.
26 From India Office, to Foreign Office, No. 2, 9th July 1903, FO 248/790.
27 Ibid.
28 From A. H. Hardinge to H. E. the Mushir ed-Doleh, dated Bahrain, 26th November 1903, FO 248/803.
29 From British Legation at Tehran (Gholhak) to the Marquess of Lansdowne, No. 128, 18th July 1904, FO 248/810.
30 No. 1 Diary of the Turbat-i-Haidari (British) Consulate for the period 5th to 18th November 1904, Par. 6, FO 248/810.
31 Ibid., Part 1.
32 From British Legation at Tehran, to the Marquess of Lansdowne, No. 128, 18th July 1904, FO 248/810.
33 Diary No. 43, 1st to 7th December 1904, FO 248/822.
34 Diary No. 46 of Sistan and Qaen (British) Consul, for the period 22nd to 31st December 1904, FO 248/822.
35 From Viceroy of India to the Foreign Office and Legation at Tehran, 3rd January 1905, FO 248/833.
36 Ibid.
37 Governor General of Khorasan Province.
38 Very likely slip of the pen. It should read 'Kain' for Qaen, the way this name was spelled by the British diplomatic mission in Iran at the time.
39 From H. B. M.'s Minister at Tehran, to the Foreign Office, No. 33, Tehran, 22nd March 1905, FO 248/837.
40 Sistan Diary, 29th March 1905, FO 248/848.
41 From H. B. M.'s Legation, to Foreign Office, No. 62, Confidential, Tehran, 22nd March 1905, FO 248/838.

42 Sistan Diary of H. B. M.'s Consul, dated 20th April 1905, FO 248/838.
43 Sistan Diary of H. B. M.'s Consul, dated 18th May 1905, FO 248/.847.
44 Ibid.
45 Confidential Diary of H. B. M.'s Consul in Sistan, dated 4th July 1905.
46 Ibid.
47 Confidential Diary No. 25 of Captain A. D. MacPherson, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain, for the period 13th to 17th July 1907, FO 248/910.
48 Amir Heshmat al-Molk III.
49 Confidential Diary of Seistan and Kain, dated 4th April 1907, FO 248/909.
50 Summary of events in Sistan and Kainat for the week ending 4th May 1907, by H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain, FO 248/909.
51 Ibid.
52 Confidential Diary No. 8, of Major B. L. Kennion, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain for the week ending 22nd February 1908, FO 248/941.
53 Sistan Confidential Diary for the week ending 9th May 1908, FO 248/941.
54 Supplement to Sistan Confidential Diary for the week ending 16th May 1908, FO 248/941.
55 Confidential Diary No. 24, of R. L. Kennion, H. B. M.'s Consul, for the week ending 6th June 1908, FO 248/941.
56 Confidential Diary No. 27, of Major Kennion, for the week ending 27th June 1908, FO 248/941.
57 Confidential Diary No. 29, for the week ending 11th July 1908, FO 248/941.
58 Confidential Diary No. 34, of Major Kennion, dated 15th August 1908, FO 248/941.
59 Confidential Diary No. 35, of H. B. M.'s Consul, dated 22nd August 1908, FO 248/941.
60 Confidential Diary No. 34, op. cit.
61 Confidential Diary No. 36, of Major Kennion, dated 29th August 1908, FO 248/941.
62 Confidential Diary No. 37, of Major Kennion, dated 5th September 1908, FO 248/941.
63 Confidential Diary No. 38, of Major Kennion, dated 12th September 1908, FO 248/941.
64 Confidential Diary No. 40, of Major Kennion, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain, for the week ending 26th September 1908, FO 248/941.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
67 Major Kennion's Defence No. 39, Confidential, Sistan 13th November 1908, FO 248/941.
68 In the event of the death of Amir Alam Khan III, Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II was a minor, and was brought up by his second-eldest brother, Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I.
69 Supplement to the Confidential Diary of Sistan, No. 34, of H. B. M.'s Consul for the week ending 4th September 1909, FO 248/971.
70 Confidential Diary of Major W. F. O'Connor, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Qaenat, for the week ending 11th September 1909, FO 248/971.
71 Supplement to Sistan Confidential Diary No. 40, for the week ending 16th October 1909, FO 248/971.
72 Sistan Confidential Diary No. 46 of Major F. McConaghey, 16th November 1910, FO 248/1002.
73 Sistan Confidential Diary No. 9, of Major W. F. O'Connor, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain, for the week ending 4th March 1911, p. 3, FO 248/1034.
74 Translation of a letter from Baron Tchorkassov to H. E. Shaukat-ul-Mulk . . ., dated 12th March 1911, Sistan Diary for week ending 18th March 1911, FO 248/1034.

75 Confidential Diary No. 13, Major O'Connor, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and kain, for the week ending 1st April 1911, FO 248/1034.
76 Confidential Diary No. 18, of Major O'Connor, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Qaenat, for the week ending 3rd May 1911, p. 2, FO 248/1034.
77 Confidential Diary of Major O'Connor, No. 13, week ending 30th March 1912, FO 248/1056.
78 Sistan Diary No. 28, of Captain Hunter, week ending 13th July 1912, FO 248/1056.
79 Confidential Diary of Captain J. B. D. Hunter, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Qaenat, No. 37, for the week ending 14th September 1912, p. 2, FO 248/1056.
80 Confidential Consular Diary of Major F. B. Prideaux, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Qaen, No. 36, for the week ending 30th August 1913, FO 248/1071.
81 Confidential Diary of Major Prideaux, No. 31, for the week ending 2nd August 1913, FO 248/1071.
82 From Amir Masum Khan to Major Prideaux, dated Sistan 7th September 1913, FO 248/1071.
83 From Major Prideaux to Amir Masum Khan, dated Sistan 9th September 1913, FO 248/1071.
84 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 4, for the week ending 23rd January 1915, FO 248/1116.
85 Ibid.
86 Confidential Sistan Diary of Major Prideaux, No. 4, 23rd January 1915, FO 248/1116.
87 From Amir Hesam ad-Doleh to Amir Shokat al-Molk, Tehran 6th January 1915, FO 248/1116.
88 Telegraph from Major Prideaux, H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Qaenat, to British Legation at Tehran, No. 24, dated 24th January 1915, FO 248/1116.
89 Confidential Diary of Sistan and Kain Consulate, No. 27 for the week ending 3rd July 1915, FO 248/1116.
90 Cavalry-men.
91 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 31 for week ending 31st July 1915, FO 248/1116.
92 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 36, for the week ending 4th September 1915, FO 248/1116.
93 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 37, for the week ending 11th September 1915, FO 248/1116.
94 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 45, for the week ending 6th November 1915, FO 248/1116.
95 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 50 for the week ending 11th December 1915.
96 Telegram from H. B. M.'s Consul-General, Mashhad, to H. B. M.'s Legation, Tehran, No.1, dated Mashhad 3rd January 1916, FO 248/1151.
97 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 28, for the week ending 8th July 1916, FO 248/1151.
98 Confidential Sistan Diary No. 18, for the week ending 18th April 1916, FO 248/1151.
99 Mashhad Confidential Diary, April 1916, p. 2., FO 248/1151.
100 Mashhad Confidential Diary, April 1916, FO 248/1151.
101 Mashhad Confidential Diary, April 1916, FO 248/1151.
102 Confidential Diary of Sistan Consulate No. 39, week ending 16th September 16, FO 248/1151.
103 From H. B. M.'s Consul for Sistan and Kain, T. V. Brenan, to the Secretary to the Government of India in the Foreign and Political Department, dated Simla 24th July 1920, FO 248/1314.
104 Meshed Political Diary of British Consulate-General, 24th September 1935, FO 371/19421.

105 Then an administrative appointment, not related to the traditional amirdom.
106 Secret and Confidential Meshed Diary No. 9, of British Consulate-General, dated 18th July 1945, FO 371/45475.
107 Savingram from H. B. M.'s Consul-Zahedan to H. B. M.'s Consul-General Meshed, No. 295, dated 22nd August 1946, FO 371/52707.
108 Savingram No. 281, from H. B. M.'s Consul-Zahedan to H. M.'s Consul-General, Meshed, 18th August 1946, FO371/52756.
109 Political Diary No. 9, of British Consul-General, secret and confidential, Meshed, 18th July 1945, FO 371/45475.
110 Savingram, secret, from H. M. Consul-Zahedan, to H.M. Consul-General, Meshed, No. 281, dated 8th August 1946, FO 371/52707.
111 Secret Diary of British Consulate-General, No. 37–1/1, Meshed, dated 15th May 1945, FO 371/52707.
112 Secret and Confidential Diary No. 37–1/1, of British Consulate-General, dated Meshed, 15th May 1946, p. 4, FO 371/52707.
113 Confidential Memorandum No. 19-S/9(c). From H. M.'s Vice-Consul, Zabul/Zahedan; to H. M.'s Consul, Zahedan, dated 25th February 1946, FO 371/52756.

4 THE PARTITIONING OF KHORASAN AND THE CREATION OF AFGHANISTAN

1 George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, two vols, Frank Cass, London 1966, Vol. II, p. 586.
2 See for example; Mir G. Mohammad Ghobar, *Afghanistan dar Masir-e Tarikh* (*Afghanistan throughout History*), Kabul 1965.
3 Ahmad Shah Dorrani's (formerly Ahmad Khan) *farman* of 16 Shavval 1167 (1753), as appeared in '*Farhang-e Iran-Zamin*', Persian journal, Tehran 1958, pp. 161–3.
4 G. P. Tate, MRAS, FRGS, *The Kingdom of Afghanistan*, Witherby & Co., 1911, reprinted in Delhi 1973, pp. 68–9.
5 The first revolt of the Abdalis of Afghanistan against the Persian governor of their district took place at the time of Shah Abbas the Great (Safavid) in the late seventeenth century. The government at Isfahan commissioned Gorgin Khan, governor of Gorjestan (Georgia) as governor of Qandehar (1692) who brought the unrest under control by expelling the Abdali leaders.
6 Sir Percy Sykes, *Ten Thousand Miles in Persia*, John Murray, London 1902, footnote to page 364.
7 Tate, op. cit., p. 4.
8 Sir Percy M. Sykes, *History of Persia*, two vols., London 1915 and 1922, Vol. II, pp. 370–2.
9 The famous diamond known as the koh-i-noor eventually found its way from Afghanistan to Great Britain and is now part of the British Crown Jewels.
10 Tehran was, at this time, chosen by Agha Mohammad Khan Qajar to be the new capital of Iran.
11 Robert Grant Watson, *History of Persia*, London 1866, p. 96.
12 Tate, op. cit., p. 6.
13 See for example; Ghobar, op. cit.
14 Dr Mahmud Afshar Yazdi, *Afghan Nameh* (*The Story of the Afghans*), two vols., Tehran 1980, Vol. II, p. 26. This source indicates that when Fath-Ali Shah finished off Nader Mirza's rebellion by putting him to death, exclaimed that a parallel vengeance had taken place. What he meant was that his great grandfather, Fath-Ali Khan had been killed by Nader Mirza's great grandfather, Nader Shah Afshar, and now Nader Shah's great grandson is killed by Fath-Ali Shah.

15 Iranian Foreign Ministry Collection of Documents = *Ahdnameh-hay-e Tarikhi*, hereafter referred to as the '*Green Book*', Tehran 1971, p. 91.
16 Tate, op. cit., p. 105.
17 Political Treaty with England, *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 91.
18 Asghar H. Bilgrami, *Afghanistan and British India*, Stirling, New Delhi 1972, p. 19.
19 The *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 70.
20 Ibid., p. 71.
21 Ibid., p. 73.
22 Ibid., p. 73–4.
23 Ibid., p. 73.
24 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 395.
25 Ibid.
26 Mohandes Mohammad Ali Mokhber, *Marzhay-e Iran* (*The Boundaries of Iran*), Tehran 1945, p. 24.
27 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 396.
28 Ibid., pp. 397–8.
29 Ibid., p. 403.
30 Under article 3 of Golestan treaty of 1813, Iran lost to Russia the cities and dependencies of Karabakh (Gharabagh), Ganjeh, Shakki, Shirvan, Qobbeh, Darband, Baku (Republic of Azerbaijan), Shureh-Gel, Achuqbash, Kurieh, Mankerbel etc. – Article 3, treaty of Golestan, *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 128. Under article 3 of the treaty of Turkmenchai of 1828, Iran lost to Russia the principalities of Armenia and Nakhjevan. – Article 3, the treaty of Turkmenchai, the *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 131.
31 Capitulation continued in Iran until it was abolished by Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1929.
32 Extract of a letter from Sir John McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, dated Mashhad, 25th June 1838, *Blue Book*, pp. 131–2, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm), pp. 131–3.
33 Ibid.
34 Referring to the siege of Herat by the Iranian forces in 1837.
35 Extract of a letter from Mr Macnoughten to Mr McNeil, dated Fort William, 21st November 1838, 'Correspondence relating to the Affairs of Persia and Afghanistan' section B., p. 2, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
36 The only copy of this treaty this author has come across was cited in General Ferrier's book. The treaty has no date and shows the signature of Major H. C. Rawlinson as the translator of the document. – General J. P. Ferrier, *Caravan Journeys and Wandering in Persia, Afghanistan, Turkmanistan, Baloochistan*, William Clowes & Sons, London 1857, pp. 508–9.
37 From Mr McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, dated Camp near Tehran, 1st August 1838, No. 39, Vol. 10, Part 1, section A, p. 1, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
38 Ghobar, op. cit., 404.
39 Captain G. H. Hunt, *The Persian Campaign*, Outram & Havilock's, London 1858, p. 92.
40 Extracts from Mr McNeil's dispatch to Viscount Palmerston, dated Tehran, 24th February 1837, No. 13, p. 3, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
41 Extracts from enclosure 1 in No. 3 of dispatch by Mr McNeil to the British government, dated Camp Tehran, July 1838, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
42 Extracts from the translation of a memorandum by Haji Mirza Aghasi in reply to Yar Mohammad Khan's proposals, enclosure 3 in No. 3, of Mr McNeil's dispatch to Viscount Palmerston, dated July 1837, pp. 11–12, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
43 Ferrier, op. cit., p. 160.
44 The *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 74.
45 Extract of letter from Mr McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, dated Camp before Herat, 11th April 1838, p. 85, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).

46 Lord Auckland had replaced Lord William Bentinch in March 1837 as Governor-General of India.
47 Ghobar, op. cit., pp. 404–5.
48 Captain Hunt, op. cit., p. 138.
49 Extracts of letter from Dust Mohammad Khan to Mohammad Shah, FO 248/162. This letter has no date, but it is a reply to Mohammad Shah's letter dated Rabi al-Avval 1270 (1854).
50 Extracts of written message delivered by Lieutenant-Colonel Stoddart to the Shah, enclosure 1 in No. 32, July 1838, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
51 Political treaty with England, *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 91.
52 Ibid.
53 Persian text of the treaty as appears in the *Green Book*, op. cit., pp. 91–126. This treaty was signed by Henry Allis, British minister at Tehran. John McNeil was, at the time, Secretary to the British Legation and replaced Allis as minister in 1836.
54 See: Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadeh, *Sheikh-Neshinha-ye khalij-e Fars* (*Sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf*) Ataei Press, Tehran 1970.
55 From McNeil to Viscount Palmerston, No. 49, dated 11th September 1838, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
56 Extracts of the letter of 15th September 1839, from Haji Mirza Aghasi to Viscount Palmerston, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
57 Enclosure 2 of the above document.
58 From Macnoughten to Burnes, dated 11th September 1837, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
59 Extracts of a letter from Mr Macnoughten to Captain Burnes, dated November 1837, FO 539/1–10 (microfilm).
60 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 446.
61 Ferrier, op. cit., p. 526.
62 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 448.
63 Ferrier, op. cit., Appendix F, p. 528.
64 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 448.
65 Sir F. Goldsmid, *Eastern Persia*, London 1876, Vol. I, pp. IX–X introduction.
66 Ferrier, op. cit., p. 311, footnote.
67 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 409.
68 Extracts of clause 9 of the translation of paper drawn by the Iranian ministers for publication in Europe, doc. 2, enclosure 1 of Mr Murray's dispatch to Earl of Clarendon, dated Tabrees, 22nd January 1856, p. 3, *British Documents of Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, part 1, from the mid-nineteenth century to the First World War, section B, the Near and Middle East, 1856–1914, edited by David Gillard, Vol. 10, Persia, 1856–1885, University Publication of America 1984, hereafter referred to as '*F.O. Book of Documents on Persia*', The actual Foreign Office reference numbers for these documents at P.R.O are from FO 60/207 to FO 60/227.
69 For text see: the *Green Book*, op. cit., pp. 180–1.
70 *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit.
71 Mirza Agha Khan Etemad ad-Doleh Sadr Azam Nouri was Prime Minister from 1851 to 1857.
72 Extracts of clause 10, doc. 2, enclosure 1, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., 22nd January 1856.
73 Extracts of Anglo-Iranian Agreement of 1853, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., doc. 210, enclosure in doc. 209, pp. 161–2.
74 Ibid.
75 Tate, op. cit., p. 158.
76 A great-grandfather of this author.

77 The *Green Book*, op. cit., p. 75.
78 Tate, op. cit., p. 158.
79 Extracts of statements made by Essan Khan's messengers to the British authorities in India, dated 12th August 1856, FO *Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., doc. 155, enclosure in doc. 154, pp. 126–7.
80 Extracts of paper drawn by Persian Ministers, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., p. 3.
81 Ibid.
82 Extracts of Sir Justin Sheil's dispatch to M. Hamond, dated 18th December 1856, doc. 209, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., p. 160.
83 From Lord Stratford de Redcliffe to the Earl of Clarendon, dated 18th January 1857, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., doc. 234, p. 181.
84 Clause 14 of dispatch of Lieutenant-Colonel Edwards to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner for the Punjab, dated Huzara, 18th September 1856, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., doc. 189, p. 147.
85 Extracts of 'Engagement Contracted by the Persian Government', relative to Herat, dated 25th January 1853, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., doc. 210, p. 162.
86 See: Essan Khan's message to the British authorities, dated 12th August 1856, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., doc. 155, enclosure in doc. 154, pp. 126–7.
87 Tate, op. cit., p. 212.
88 Extracts of letter from the Earl of Clarendon to Lord Wodehouse, dated F.O. 25th December 1856, doc. 217, *FO Book of Documents on Persia*, op. cit., p. 165.
89 Tate, op. cit., p. 212.
90 Original Persian text of this agreement and a number of relevant letters do not have any detectable date. The enclosure to the dispatch to James Murray by Secretary to the Governor of India, dated 25th February 1856, FO 248/16.
91 Ibid.
92 Tate, op. cit., p. 212.
93 Ibid.
94 Treaty of Peace between Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the Shah of Persia, FO 60/403, p. 2.
95 Extracts of third paragraph of article 6 of 1857 Peace Treaty of Paris, op. cit.
96 See previous pages.
97 First paragraph of the 1957 Peace Treaty of Paris.
98 Engagements of British government under article 6 of 1857 Peace Treaty of Paris, FO 60/403, p. 8.
99 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 587.
100 G. P. Tate asserts that the City of Herat was invested by Amir Dust Mohammad Khan on 27th July 1862, which cannot be correct as Dust Mohammad Khan died on 19th June 1863, only a week or so after the capture of Herat.
101 Ghobar, op. cit., p. 589.
102 Ahmad Shah Dorrani was born in 1722, and died in 1772.
103 *Persian Frontiers*, Section on boundaries with Afghanistan, RRX/7/I, FO 371/40219, p. 2.
104 See introduction and relevant references.
105 Curzon, op. cit., p. 586.

5 THE PARTITIONING OF KHORASAN AND BALUCHISTAN AND THE EMERGENCE OF MODERN BOUNDARIES

1 Extract of Telegraph to the British government from Governor-General of India, dated 24th January 1878, FO 60/217.

2 Ibid.
3 General MacLean's *memorandum* of 14th December 1889, FO 60/538, p. 10 of 279.
4 *Memorandum* of General MacLean, dated Mashad, 6th July 1891, FO 60/538, pp. 310–405.
5 Ibid.
6 The Persian written claims, enclosed in MacLean's *memorandum* of 14th December 1889, FO 60/538, p. 11 of 280.
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CONCLUSION

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INDEX

Aal Khalifah (*ruling dynasty of Bahrain*) 46
abanbar (*water reservoir*) 68
Abbas Mirza (*crown prince*) 19
Abbas Qoli Khan 141
Abbasabad 21
Abbasid (*dynasty, caliphate, caliphs*) 4, 36, 42–3, 48, 123, 174, 213
Abbott, James 11
Abd al-Ahad Khan (*Speaker of Afghan Majlis*) 202
Abdali(s), Dorrani(s) (*amirs, rulers, kings*) 41, 56, 80, 92, 126, 131, 174, 211, 213
Abdali, Ahmad Khan (*Ahmad Shah Dorrani*) 10, 18, 58–61, 63, 124–7, 130, 143, 149, 155, 164, 174–5, 178, 184–6, 213, 220
Abdali, Mahmud and Ashraf Afghan (*Abdali rebellion of 1722*) 18, 41, 56, 164
Abdali, Prince Yusof 142–3
Abdoj-Jabbar bin Abdor-Rahman 43
Abdullah (*ben Khazem*) 45
Abdullah Khan (*leader of Brahuei Baluch*) 164
Abdur-Rahman 45
Abdur-Rahman Khan 12, 16
Abramov, M. 118
Abu Moslem Khorasani (*Hormozan*) 44
Abu Musa, island 37
Abu Saeed 36
Abu Sahl Masihi 35
Abul Nam Sistani 44
Abyssinian 9
Achaemenid, Achaemenian (*dynasty, kings*) 3–4, 30–33
Aegean Sea 32
Afghan(s) 96
Afghan, Mohammad Mirza 64
Afghan Band 196
Afghanistan 1–2, 6, 10–13, 16–18, 22–24, 30, 34, 38, 41, 46, 63, 66–7, 69, 75, 80, 90, 93–94, 112, 119, 122–6, 128, 131–4, 136, 139, 143–4, 146, 148–54, 156–7. 159–61, 163–6, 169, 174, 176–7, 179–80, 182–8, 190–7, 199–207, 209–11, 214–17, 220
Africa 9, 14
Afshar (*dynasty, kings*) 42
Afshar, Nader Shah (*Nader Qoli*) 10, 15, 37, 47, 50, 55–8, 61, 63, 122–4, 126–8, 164, 174, 177, 186, 210, 213
Afshar, Nader Mirza 127–8
Afshar, Salim Khan 58
Agha Ashari 119
Agha Faizhid 119
Aghvans 125
Ahmad Khan (*Sardar of Lash-Jowain*) 180–81, 183, 185–6
Agnew, J.A. 8
Agricultural School of the University of Tehran 80
Akai (*Akad*) 31
Akhal Tekke Turkman 20, 24, 213
Akhlaq-e Naseri (book in Persian) 48
Akhtechi 205
Akhund-Zadeh, Faqir Mohammad 196
al-Qaeda 211
Alam (*family*) 42, 78, 116–18, 120, 203
Alam, Amir Asadollah Khan (*Prime Minister, Minister of the Imperial Court*) 80–81, 116–17, 120, 215, 217
Alam, Amir Shokat al-Molk *see* Khozeimeh Amirs
Alam, Bibi Fatemeh 79–80, 89
Alam, Bibi Zohreh 79–80, 82
Alexander the Great 3, 8–9, 30, 125
Ali Mohammad Khan, Mr. 204
Aliabad (*the hills, village*) 77
Alikhani, Dr. Ali-Naghi 163, 217

Alizai, Nour Mohammad 124
Allen, George 205
Alp-Takin 35
Altay, General Fakhr ed-Din (*Altay Lie*) 159–60, 163
Amanollah Khan 16–17
Amin as-Sultan (*Prime Minister*), Mirza Ali-Asqar Khan 154, 194.
Amini, Dr. Ali 206
Amir Eltiaz 164
Amir Kabir, Mirza Taghi Khan Amir Nezam 138
Amir Khan 126
Amir Mehrab Khan 58
Amir Mohabbat 164
Amir Teimur Gurkani (Tamber Lane, Teimur Lang) 36
Amiri 116
Amirs of Borderlands and Eastern Iranian Borders, The 219
Amol 159
Amu Darya, river 20
Anglo-Afghan (*wars, relations, etc.*) 11
Anglo-Iranian (*relations, wars, treaties*) 136, 138, 175
Anglo-Persian Bank *see* Bank-e Shahanshahi
Anglo-Russian (*rivalries, treaties, etc.*) 2, 6, 13–14, 52, 117–18, 193, 211–12, 214–15
Ankara 160, 163
Ansari, Mirza Masum Khan 70, 165–8, 182–4, 187–8
Ansari, Mirza Saeed Khan 165, 179
Antaean 31
Arab, Amir Ali-Naghi Khan 65
Arab(s) (*Arabic, people, language, tribes*) 35, 37, 42, 45, 47, 76, 123
Arabia 9
Aras (*Arras*), river 21, 132
Archi Sarvi 205
Ardebil 5
Arghandab River (*Khardarya*) 191, 205
Aristotle (*Greek philosopher*) 9
Armenia 19, 40
Arrowsmith 22
Asadi (*Asjodi*) 35
Asef ad-Doleh, Prince Hamzeh Mirza (*Vali, of Khorasan*) 65, 93, 134, 138, 141, 156
Asef ad-Doleh, Mohammad-Ali Khan 66
Asfia, Mr. Safi 207
Asfzar 60
Ashkhabad (*Eshghabad*) 20
Ashura (*the anniversary of Imam Hussein's martyrdom*) 77
Ashuradeh Island (*Achuradeh*) 22, 26, 38
Asia 9, 14, 106, 123, 129, 133, 211, 214
Asperan 161
Astarabad (*later Gorgan*) 22–3, 26, 58, 63, 134
Atabaks 34
Athenian(s) 31
Atrak, river 20–24, 26, 28, 38
Auckland, Lord 137, 139
Aurang Zib (*Shah of India*) 15
Austria (*Austrian*) 10, 19, 53
Avicenna *see* Ibn Sina
Ayati, Haj Sheikh Mohammad Hussein 46, 59, 87
Ayatollah, Seyyed Abdollah Behbahani 73
Ayatollah, Seyyed Mohammad Tabatabaei 73
Ayatollah Nouri, Sheikh Fazlollah 72
Ayubi 158
Azad Khan 169
Azerbaijan (*of Iran*) 5, 29, 34, 58, 118, 135
Azerbaijan (*republic*) 19, 34
Azeri (*Azerbaijani*) 36, 39, 55
Azov 18

Babur (*Baber*) 14, 36
Babylonia 31
Bacheh Saqqa 17
Bad Qeis 44
Badi oz-Zaman Mirza 49
Bafgh 65
Baghdad 4–5, 48, 57, 146, 213
Bahadur Shah II 15
Bahar, Malek osh-Shoara 79
Bahar, Mehrdad 213
Baharestan (*book in Persian*) 46, 59, 64–5, 87
Bahlul Khan 126
Bahrain 6, 42, 44, 46, 100, 216
Bahram Gour (*Varahram V*) 4, 33, 47
Bahu 164, 169
Baisonqor 36
Bakharz 151, 157
Balkh 38, 49, 219
Balkhan Bay 38
Baltic (*sea*) 18
Baluch (*Baluchi, chiefs, tribes, people*) 50, 69
Baluch, Ebrahim Khan Pordeli 67
Baluch, Mohammad Khan 57
Baluch, Sardar Ahmad Khan 67
Baluch, Sultan Ahmad Khan (*Sardar Ahmad Shah of Heart*) 67, 75, 80, 143, 147

Baluch, Sardar Ebrahim Khan 67
Baluchistan 2, 12, 42, 50–52, 61, 80, 82, 88–9, 94, 102, 122–3, 150–51, 164–6, 169–70, 173–5, 182–3, 212, 214, 216
Bamposht 169
Bampur 164, 166–7, 169
Band-e Kamal Khan 192, 200, 203, 205, 208
Band-e Kuhak (*Kohak*) 199–200, 204
Band-e Sistan (*Sistan Band*) 191, 196–7, 199
Bandan (*Neh-Bandan*) 42, 188, 200
Bandar Abbas 6, 56, 123, 146
Bani Hareth 43
Bank-e Shahanshahi (*Imperial Bank*, *Anglo-Persian Bank*), 76, 115, 198
Baorma 23
Baqa ad-Doleh Vakili 55
Barakzaei (*tribe or clan*) 151, 179
Barakzai, Haji Jamal Khan 124
Barani 23
Basam bin Ebrahim 43
Bastani-Parizi, Professor 77
Bayat (*clan, family*) 59–60
Bayat, Haji Seif ad-Din 57
Bazar Haji 24
bazras qoshun (*military inspector*) 55
Beconsfield, Lord 149
Beger, M. 22
Behbud Khan 59
Beirut 88
Bellow, H.W. 92–3
Belqeis Khanum 82
Bengal 15
Bid-Abadi Esfahani, Agha Mohammad 64
Biglar Beigi (*Safavid state system*) 5
Bin Laden (*al-Qaeda*) 17
Birjand 45, 50–52, 54, 56, 61, 63–4, 66, 69–77, 79–80, 82, 86, 88, 90, 92, 95, 100–101, 103–7, 112–14, 116–18, 156, 174
Biruni 35
Bistun, mount 31
Black Sea 13, 18
Boghra, Abgardan dam 205
Boghra, Canal 205
Bokhara 7, 11, 19–20, 25, 37, 126, 133–4, 144, 210, 219
Boleida 169
Bolshaya Sovietskaya Entsiklopedia (*Soviet newspaper*) 26–7
Bolshevik Revolution 2
Bolshoy Sovietskiy Atlas Mira (*Soviet atlas*) 27
Bombay 130, 137–8, 166
Borazjan 146
Bost 191
Britain (*Great Britain*) 2, 10–11, 13–16, 22–3, 25, 30, 33, 46, 52–3, 86, 91–2, 94, 117, 128–9, 133, 138, 140, 144, 150, 166, 178–9, 182, 204, 209, 211–12, 214
British (*people, Empire, text*) 6, 9, 19, 41, 90, 137
British Arbitration Commission 69
British Consulate (*Consul*), 90, 95, 97–9, 101, 103–12, 114–15, 117–19, 157, 196–7, 202
British Embassy (*Legation*) 29, 107, 111, 114, 149, 168, 180–181
British India (*British India Empire*) 6, 8, 11–12, 14–15, 52, 88, 103, 123, 128, 130, 133, 137, 139–40, 146, 149–50, 152, 158, 166, 173, 175, 182, 184, 204, 209, 211–12, 216
British Minister (*Ambassador*) 29, 107, 111, 114, 149, 168, 180–81
Bulan Pass 165
Burma 15
Burnes, Captain 22, 136
Burqa (hijab, veil) 17
Bushehr 129, 146

Calcutta 12, 151, 210
Caliphate (*Arab Caliphate, Caliphate of Islam*) 4, 9, 44, 213
Canada 205, 207
Caribbean 9
Caspian Sea 13, 18, 20–22, 26, 30, 34, 37–9
Caucasus 13, 18–19, 21, 37, 123, 209
Cawley, R.H.H.R.C. Baron 146
Central Asia 1–2, 4, 7–8, 10–11, 13–14, 16–20, 22, 25, 30, 32–5, 38–9, 41, 123, 125, 128, 132–4, 139, 209, 213, 219
Chaat 20, 21
chahar bagh 58–9
Chahbahar (*Chah Bahar*) 164, 166
Chandir 21
Chekab 158, 161
Chikishlir 20
Chile 205
China 7, 13, 20, 219
China (*great wall of*) 33
Chionites 33
Chitra 12
Chokhansur (*Chukhansur*) 69, 141, 178–9
Churchill, Mr. 115

Constantinople 18
Cossacks 113
Crimea (*Crimean War*) 11
Crusades 9
Ctesiphon 5
Curzon, Lord (*Marquis*) George N. of Kedleston 10, 13–14, 21, 99, 122, 149, 158, 193–4, 211
Cyprus 31
Cyrus the Great (*Kurosh*) 9, 31, 33

D'Hoet, Monsieur 97
Daghistan 5, 18–19
Dara, Mr. Abd al-Ahad 205
Daregaz 141
Dari (*Persian in Afghanistan*) 125
daric 31
Darius the Great 31
Deh-e Dust Mohammad 203
Darudi, Mirza Hussein Khan 65
Darya-e Nour diamond 127
Dasht River 168
Dasht-e Gorgan (*Gorgan Plain*) 28
dast-e Englis (*the English hand*) 121
Davud bin Garaz 44
Deh Hassan Kharut (*Kharat*) 196, 200
Deh Isa Khan (village) 96
Deh Yar Mohammad 196–7, 200
Deh-e Ali Jangi 200
Deh-e Ali Mardan 200
Deh-e Chahar Borjak 204
Deilamids 35
Delhi 15
Deylaman 43
Divan Sultan 49
Dizzak 164, 168, 169
Domingez, Mr. F.F. 205
Don, river 18
Doria, Dr 176–7
Dorrani (*Durrani, dynasty, family*) 61
Dorrani, Ahmad Shah *see* Ahmad Khan Abdali
Doulat-Abad 29
Dragon d'Annam (*French order of third class*) 107
Duli Khan Shadlu 59, 60
Durand, Captain Algernon 12–13, 170, 216
Durand Line 12, 16
Dust Mohammad Khan (*Amir of Kabul*) 11–12, 16, 75, 80, 131, 137, 139, 140, 143–4, 146–51, 178–9, 185, 220
Dust Mohammad Khan (*Baluch*) 50, 183
Dustyari 169

East India Company (*British*) 14–15, 129, 146
East India Company (*French Compagnie des Indies*) 15
Eastern Persia (*book in English*), 67, 187
Eastwick, Mr. 148, 177, 180
Ebrahim Khan 164, 180–81, 185–6
Ebn Bibi 34
Edwards, Lieutenant-Colonel 144
Egypt (*Egyptian*) 9, 31–2
Ein ad-Doleh (*Prime Minister*) 100, 112
Elbe River 192
Elphinson, Mount Stewart 131
Emam Qoli Khan Abivardi 58
Emam Qoli Khan Mossellu Turkman 49
England 19, 51, 136, 194
English (*people, language, etc.*) 15, 19, 42
English Government 6
Eqbal, Dr Manuchehr 80
Eraq-e Ajam 123
Eraq-e Arab *see* Iraq
Erzerum 140
Esfandak 164, 168–70
Eshaqzai chiefs 124
Eshaqzai, Ahmad Khan 141
Eshraq, Akhund Molla Abdul-Karim 64
Essan Khan 143–4
Estonia 18
Etesam al-Molk 55
Ettelaat (*Iranian newspaper*) 173
Europe (*European*) 9–11, 13–14, 32, 82, 88

Faqir Mohammad Khan 166
Farah 50, 56, 61, 126, 130, 144, 146, 151, 178
Farghanah Valley 7, 20, 25, 36, 39, 219
farman (*decree*) 61, 66, 141
Farman-Farma (family) 82, 113
Farrokh Khan Amin al-Molk 146–7
Farrokh, Mr Mehdi (Mo'tasam as-Saltaneh) 159
Farrokhi 35
Fars (*Pars, Persia*) 57, 79–80, 82
Farzaneh 151, 153
Fateh (*Futeh*) Mohammad Khan 134
Fath-Ali Khan 58
Fath-Ali Shah *see* Qajar, Fath-Ali Shah
fawj (an old Iranian division) 55
Feiz-Mohammad Khan 163

Ferdosi, Hakim Abul-Qassem 4, 33–5
Ferrier (*General Joseph Pierre*) 61, 156
Fili 58
Fillipani-Ronconi, Pio 32, 34
Finance Ministry (*of Iran*) 54
Finland 18
Finken Stain (*treaty of 1807*) 129–30
Firouz ad-Din, Prince 130–31, 142
Firouzeh 21, 26–7
Foreign Ministry, Foreign Minister (*Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*) 54, 70, 90, 107, 110, 113, 163, 165, 168, 180–81, 198, 216
Foreign Office, Secretary (*British, India*) 23–4, 27, 99, 149, 166, 177, 179, 195, 198–9, 203, 210
Foroughi (*Mohammad Ali*) 163
Foroughi, Mr. Mahmud 206–8
Foshenji, Seyyed Nour-Mohammad-Shah Khan 182
France (*French*) 9–10, 19, 128–9, 146, 212, 216
French Revolution 9
Franco-Russian, *threat of* 130

Ganji, Dr. Mohammad Hassan 206
Garmab 153
Garmsirat Hirmand 49
Garna 151
Geh 164
German emissary 53
Germanophile 53
Germany 13–14, 52, 53
Georgia 132
Ghassan 5
Ghazali, Imam Mohammad 36
Ghazna (*Qazna*) 35
Ghozz 36
Ghurian 130–31, 138, 140–41, 146, 148, 151, 158
Girishk 140–41, 205
Gladstone (*British Prime Minister*) 13
gnosticism 35
God-e Zereh 208
Gohargan 205
Goldsmid arbitration 94, 200
Goldsmid line 169, 189, 198
Goldsmid, Colonel, Major General, Sir, Frederick 12, 67–70, 85, 93–4, 166–8, 182–4, 187–8, 190, 192, 196–7, 199–203
Golestan (*treaty of 1813*) 19, 37, 130, 216
Golestan Palace 112
Gonabad 70, 74, 113
Gorjestan (Georgia) 127
Gorgan 22
Gorgan, river 21–4, 38, 63
Gottmann, Jean 8, 32
Granville, Lord 190
Great Game 1–3, 6, 8, 10, 13–14, 16, 18–19, 22–3, 25, 30, 37, 41, 90, 92, 106, 117–18, 121–22, 133, 150, 193, 209–11, 214–15
Greater Khorasan 2, 4, 8, 27, 41, 124, 127, 150, 210
Greece 8
Greek (*city-state, civilization, people*) 3, 30
Gujarat 35, 150
Guk Tappeh 20–21
Gwader (*Gwadur*, *Gwater, Guater*), Gulf of 91, 165–9

Habibeh Soltan Begom 59
Hbibollah Khan 16
Habl al-Matin (*Persian newspaper*) 104
Habsburgs (*political authority*) 9
Hadrian's Wall 33
Haj Mirza Aghasi (*Prime Minister*) 11, 38, 65, 135–6, 138
Haj Nasir as-Saltaneh, Sarhad-Dar 110
Haji Ebrahim Khan 129
Haji Reza, Sheikh 120
Hale, Mr 76
Hamadan 115
Hamilton, Lord George 99
Hamun Lake 190–1, 208
Harding, Lord, Sir A. 99, 173, 199
Hari-rud, river 21, 27, 29, 151–2, 154
Harish Sistani 42
Hasan bin Qahtabah 44
Hasar 22
Hash 49
Hashtadan (*plain, qanats, mound, etc.*) 6, 151–5, 157–8, 216
Hassan Khan Qaraguzlu 127
Hassan-Qoli, Gulf 20, 24
Hasting, Warren 15
Hazarah (*tribes*) 125, 140, 156, 211
Hazem (*or Khazem*) 42
Hekmat, Ali-Asqar 46
Hepthalite Hun (*Hepthalites*) 33,–4
Herat 10–12, 16, 23, 38, 44–5, 49–50, 58–9, 61, 64–7, 75, 93, 122, 126–52, 154–5, 157, 159, 174–5, 178, 180, 185–6, 193, 211

Hesam ad-Doleh I, II and III *see* Khozeimeh, Amir Ali-Akbar Khan, Amir Alam Khan, and Amir Masum Khan
Hesam as-Saltaneh, Prince Governor of Khorasan 65
Hezar Masjed, Kuh-e 37
Hindukush (*Hindu Kush*) 11, 139
Hirah (*Manzerah*) 4
Hirmand delta 93, 178, 184
Hirmand, River (*Helmand, Helmund*) 4–5, 67, 69, 85, 119, 140, 150, 164, 169, 181, 186–8, 190–92, 194, 196, 199–208, 216–17
History of Islam in Iran (*book in Persian*) 43
History of Sistan and Lash-Jowain (*book in Persian*) 177, 182
Hodgson, Sir R. 27
Hoghian 205
Holaku Khan, the Mongolian 48, 213
Holdich, Colonel Sir T. Hangerford 145, 169–71, 211–12
Holdich Line (*Blue line*) 169, 171, 173
Hormozgan 89
Houtrum Schindler, General 125
Howson, Mr. 105, 108
Hunt, Captain 137
Husseiniyeh Shokatiyeh *see* Shokatiyeh
hydrotechnical installations (*on Atrak River*) 28

Ialat(s) (*Ayalat*) 5
Ibn Sina (*Avicenna*) 35
Ilak Khan(s) 34, 36
Ilkhani, Sam Khan 141
ilyati (*tribal or irregular soldiers*) 55, 85
Imam Ali (*p.b.u.h.*) 70
Imam Hussein (*Aba-Abdollah p.b.u.h.*) 66, 70, 75, 77, 116
Imam Reza (*p.b.u.h.*) 70, 80, 128
India (*India Empire*) 2, 10–16, 18–19, 25, 35–6, 51, 58, 69, 82, 94, 96–99, 123, 125, 127, 130, 132–4, 136–40, 149, 151, 157–8, 165, 167–8, 170–72, 175–7, 179, 181, 183–4, 186, 193, 196, 200, 202–3, 210, 212, 214
India Office 99, 166
India Office Record and Library 210
Indian Borderland 1880–1900, The 145
Indian Ocean 164
Indus 132–3, 164
Ingria 18
International rivers 192
Iraj 33
Iraj Mirza 79
Iran 2–9, 12–17, 19, 21–3, 25–7, 29–30, 32, 35, 37–43, 45–8, 51–2, 54, 56, 58, 61, 67, 72, 74, 79–80, 87, 90, 93–4, 106, 115–17, 119, 122, 124, 126, 128–31, 133, 135, 138–9, 141, 144, 152, 154, 156, 159, 161, 164–6, 169–70, 173, 177, 182, 185, 188, 193–4, 196, 199, 201–2, 204, 206, 208, 210, 212–17
Iran-Afghanistan treaty of 1973 206
Iran, *Islamic Republic of* 39, 213
Iranian Plateau 35–6, 47, 174
Iranshahr 32
Iraq, Iraqi (*Eraq-e Arab*) 43, 56–7, 120, 123, 204, 216
Iravan (*Yaravan*) 57
Isaiah 31
Isfahan 39, 52, 56–7
Islam 3, 5, 9–11, 17, 35
Islamic (*people, civilization, etc.*) 35
Ismailite 35
Italy 14
Ivan the Terrible (Ivan IV) 17

Jafar Khan (*the Kurd*) 60, 141
Jahan-Abad 178–9, 181
Jahangoshay-e naderi (*book in Persian*) 56–7
Jalal-Abad 181
Jalal ad-Din 137
Jalaluding Firoz 119
Jalayer, Hassan Khan 65
Jalayer, Yusef-Ali Khan 58–9
Jalq 169–71
Jam *see* Torbat Shaikh Jam
Jam, Mahmud 87
Jamazeh-savar 113
Janid dynasty 20
Jaroki 196
Jask 165
Jerusalem 31
Jews 31
jezail 55
Jones, Sir Harlford 130
Joubert, Monsieur 129
Journal de St. Petersburg (*Russian newspaper*) 24
Juy-e No 205

Kabul (*Cabul*) 5, 10–12, 16, 58–9, 64, 75, 80, 85, 93, 125–9, 131, 136–7, 139–40, 143–4, 146, 148–51, 158–9, 169, 174, 178–80, 183, 186, 190, 197, 206–7, 211, 215

Kabudeh 160–1
kadkhoda (*Katkhoda, village headman*) 54, 173
Kafir Kala (*Kafer Qal'eh*) 154
Kain *see* Qaen
Kaj (*Kach*) 167–9
Kajaki (*dam*) 205
Kalali(s) 213
Kalat (*of Baluchistan*) 61, 140, 164–7, 169–70, 182, 214
Kalat (*Kalat-e Naderi*) 59
Kalateh Akbariyeh 103
Kalhudi, Dr. 119
Kamaragh 205
Kameran, *Prince* (*Khan, Mirza*, *Shah*) 38, 93, 130–1, 134–8, 140
Kandahar *see* Qandehar
Karachi 150
Karat 151
Karbala 120
Karelia 18
kargozar, kargozari (*local diplomatic representative*) 54, 90, 98–100, 114–5, 152, 157, 194
Karimdad Khan (*Kerim-dad Khan*) 156
Kashaf-Rud, river 27
Kashfal-Ghemmah (*book in Persian*) 45
Kashan 64, 115
Kashgharia 11, 20
Kashmir 12, 35
Kasravi, Dr. Mahmud 55
Kavir desert 53
Kazakhstan (*Kazakhs*) 6–7, 10, 25, 27, 38–39, 210
Kazemi, Mr. Baqer 204
Kazerun 115
Kerman 49, 61, 64, 67, 75, 82, 89, 164, 177, 202
Keyani (*family, dynasty*) 49–50, 174
Keyani (*Kiyani*), Agha Malik 119
Khaf 113, 159
Khajeh Ahmad (*village*) 96
Khajeh Nasir ad-Din Tusi 48
Khali'e, Hussein 47
Khalili(s) 213
Khalili, Abbas 43
Khanat(s) 7, 19, 25, 38, 41
Kharan 169–70
Khark Island 138, 146, 154
kharvar (*ass-load, about 300 kilos*) 56, 130
Khavarej (*Khawarej*) 43–5
Khazem bin Khozeimeh 43–5, 48
Khazem ben Salmi 45, 48
Khiveh 7, 11, 20, 23, 25, 37–8, 133–4, 140, 144, 210, 219
Khojand 7, 20, 25, 38, 210
Khojas 20, 219
Khorramshahr (*Mohammarah*) 146
Khorasan 1, 4, 22, 27, 35, 37, 41–9, 51–2, 54, 56–7, 59, 61, 63, 65–6, 88, 93, 96, 112, 117, 119, 122–3, 126–8, 130–31, 134–5, 138, 141–2, 149–52, 154, 156–7, 174–5, 178, 212–13, 215, 219
Khoshabeh 158
Khosro, Anushirvan the Just 32, 34
Khosro Parviz 47
khotbeh 36, 130–31, 135, 144, 148
Khozayyah, tribe 42
Khozeime Alam (*Khozeimeh Alam*, *family*) 42
Khozeime Alam, Amir Hussein Khan 45, 72, 78–80, 85, 88–9, 108, 110, 112, 121, 160–61, 205–7, 215
Khozeimeh (*Khozaima*, *Amirdom, Amirs, army, dynasty, family*) 1–2, 4, 8, 41–2, 45–7, 49–57, 59, 61–2, 66–7, 72–3, 78–9, 82, 86, 90–92, 94–5, 100, 103–4, 110, 112, 116–22, 126, 160, 175, 197, 213–15
Khozeimeh Alam, Tahereh 161
Khozeimeh, Ali-Akbar Khan (*son of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 82
Khozeimeh, Amir Alam Khan (*son of Amir Masum Khan*) 88, 110
Khozeimeh, Amir Ali Khan (*son of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 82
Khozeimeh, Amir Aqdas Khanum (*daughter of Amir Masum Khan*) 88
Khozeimeh, Amir Esmail Khan (*son of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 79–80, 82
Khozeimeh, Amir Masum Khan (*brother of Amir Alam Khan I*) 58–60, 63, 126
Khozeimeh, Amir Parviz Khan 80
Khozeimeh, Heidar-Qoli Khan 75
Khozeimeh, Heshmat Khanum (*daughter of Amir Masum Khan*) 88
Khozeimeh, Hussein Khan (*son of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 82
Khozeimeh, Maryam Khanum (*daughter of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 83
Khozeimeh, Mohammad Amir Khan 82
Khozeimeh, Qodsiyeh Khanum (*daughter of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 83
Khozeimeh, Taghi Khan (*son of Samsam ad-Doleh*) 83
Khozeimeh, Talat Khanum (*daughter of Amir Masum Khan*) 88

Khozeimeh Amirs: Amir Alam Khan I (*Mir Alam Khan*), *Vakil ad-Doleh* 50, 57–61, 63–4, 66, 92, 126–7, 164, 174–5, 213; Amir Alam Khan II 64; Amir Alam Khan III, *Heshmat al-Molk I*, *Hesam ad-Doleh II*, *Amir Tuman* 65–73, 75, 77, 82, 93–4, 181, 183, 185, 187–8, 214; Amir Ali Khan 63–4, 92, 127; Amir Ali-Akbar Khan, *Hesam ad-Doleh II*, *Heshmat al-Molk II* 67, 71–5, 77, 82–3, 85–6, 90, 94–107, 110–11, 172–3, 197, 202–3, 214; Amir Asadollah Khan, *Hesam ad-Doleh I* 64–6, 93; Amir Ebrahim Khan (I) 48; Amir Esmail Khan (I) 47–8, 50, 56–7, 63; Amir Masum Khan, *Hesam ad-Doleh III*, *Heshmat al-Molk III* 53, 71–2, 77–80, 82–8, 102–3, 106–15, 159, 172, 215; Amir Mohammad Khan, 48; Amir Mohammad Ebrahim Khan, *Shokat al-Molk II* 50, 52–3, 55, 71–2, 75, 77–80, 82–3, 86, 90, 101–7, 109–16, 120, 161, 173, 213, 215; Amir Mohammad Esmail Khan, *Shokat al-Molk I* 67, 71–6, 80, 86, 95–6, 100–101, 103, 107, 148, 187; Amir (*Sartip*) Mohammad Reza Khan, *Samsam ad-Doleh* 78–80, 82–4, 86, 104, 111, 114–15, 160, 215; Amir Sultan (*Saheb of Qaen*), 48–9
Khozeimeh bin Khazem 45, 47
Khozeimeh dynasty 41, 45, 48–9
Khusf 66
Khwarazm 20, 219
Kingdom of Afghanistan, The 127
Kirkuk 57
Kohandel Khan 131, 133, 136–7, 141, 178
Kohkiluyeh 50, 56
Kolukh Pardeh (*Kulukh Pardai*) 153, 155
Konopatkin 119
Kopet Dagh 20–21, 37
Kord-Bacheh, Mohammad 180
Korki 188
Krasnovodsk 20, 24, 38
Kughand 11, 20
Kuhak 168–70, 188, 191, 196
Kuh-e Baba 190
Kuh-e Darband 152
Kuh-e Gedayaneh (*Kuh-I Kadanna*) 152, 154, 158
Kuh-e Kharmagah (*Kuh-e Altay*) 161
Kuh-e Malek Siah 156, 173, 188, 199–200
Kuh-e Nour (*koh-i noor diamond*) 127
Kuh-e Rigu 161
Kuh-e Sang-e Dokhtar 152–3, 158
Kuran Dagh 37
Kurd (*Kurdish tribes of Khorasan*) 60
Kushan (*people, empire*) 33
Kushk 196
Kust 174
Kuwait 216
Kyrgyzstan 2, 7, 25, 27, 34, 39, 210

Lamakin, General 23–5
Lankaran 60
Lansdowne, Lord (*Marquis of*) 99, 193
Lar 115
Lash-Jovein (*Lash-Juwain*) 69, 141, 180–81, 188
Latvia 18
Levant 19
Libya 31
Livonia 18
Lockhart, Professor 27
London 13, 15, 89, 130, 142–4, 146, 149, 151, 193, 195, 202–3, 210
Loraei (*tribe, forces*) 57, 59
Lotfabad 20–22, 27
Lotf-Ali Khan 75
Lovet, Captain 168
Lowry, Mr. Robert L. 205
Ludin, Mr. 206
Lytton, Lord (*Viceroy*) 12

Ma'az bin Salim 44
MacDonald Kinner, Sir John 132
Macdonald, captain 170
Macedonia 8, 31
MacLean, General C.S. 22, 151–4, 156–8, 160
MacNaghton, W.H. 139
Madras 14
Majlis 88, 104–5, 118, 160–61, 205–7
Makran 6, 150, 165, 182
Malcolm, Sir (*Captain*) John 63–4, 129–30
Malek Hussein Mirza 131
Malek Mohammad Sistani 49
Malektaj 80
Mamun, Caliph 42, 46–8
Mansur, Hassan-Ali 81
Manazerah *see* Hirah
Manchu 20
Manghits 20
Mansur, Caliph 42–4
Mardan Khan 183
Marco Polo 48

Marquis of Salisbury 170
Marv (*Merv*) 11, 24, 37–8, 49, 126, 134, 210, 219
Marvi, Mohammad Momen Beik 164
Marvrud 44–6
Mashhad (*Mashad, Meshed*) 50, 54, 56, 59, 61, 65–7, 70, 72, 74, 78, 80, 95, 97, 102, 114–15, 117–18, 122, 126–8, 131, 135, 141–2, 149, 152, 156–7, 159, 178, 196
Mashkil River 169–70
Masumiyeh School 63
Mater, Bernard 129
Mazandaran (*Mazandarani*) 58, 63, 159, 213
McMahon arbitration 95
McMahon, Major, Colonel Henry (*McMahon's Line*) 96, 101, 156, 161, 171, 191, 193–205
McNeil, Sir John 38, 133–4, 136–8, 140, 149
Median (*Medes*) 31
Mediterranean Sea 32
Meftah, Abdol-Hussein 163
Mehdi-Ali Khan, Mirza 129
Mehr-Del Khan 141
Mehrab Khan (*Baluch*) 164–5
Meimaneh 140
Mesopotamia 4–5, 35
Mian Kangi 188, 192
Mianeh 150
Miller, Mr. (*Russian Consul*) 98–9, 173, 193, 197
Mir Khodadad 165
Mir Naseer Khan 61
Mirjaveh 102, 170–73, 214
Mirza Agha Khan Sadr Azam Nouri *see* Nouri
Mirza Jahangir Khan 152
Mirza Mohammad-Ali Khan, General 152
Mirza Mohammad-Omar 152
Mirza Shafa 143
misquotes 55
Moazez al-Molk 100–101, 173
mobasher (*local adviser*) 161
Moghul (*Mugul*) Empire (*dynasty, kings, emperors*) 14–15, 125
Mohammad Amin (Ameen) 132
Mohammad Amin Khan 179
Mohammad Azim Khan, Sardar 131, 143
Mohammad ben Harun 47
Mohammad Davoud Khan (*prime minister, president*) 170, 206
Mohammad Mehdi 43
Mohammad Nader Shah 17, 202–3
Mohammad Sadeq 157
Mohammad Sadeq Khan 141, 144
Mohammad Sharif Khan 178
Mohammad Vali Khan 131
Mohammad Zaher Shah 207
Mohammad Zaman Shah 17
Mohtasham, Amir Naser ad-Din 48
Mojahedin 17
Mojmal at-tavarikh-e golestaneh (*book in Persian*) 57–8, 60
Mojtahed-Zadeh, Pirouz 219
Moldavia 31
Molla Mohammad Mehdi 115
Mond 168–9
Mongolia, Mongols, Mongolian(s) (*empire*) 36, 48, 125, 219
Monsef (*Monsif*, *family*) 72, 118, 161
monshi (secretary or clerk) 53
Morad Mirza (*Qajar*) Prince Hesam as-Saltaneh 66, 141–3
Morad Tappeh 57
Morning Star 23
Moscow 18, 29, 38–9, 130
Moshir ad-Doleh (*Foreign Minister, Prime Minister*) 99–100, 106, 158, 199
mostofi (*secretariat or administrator of the Amirdom*) 53–4, 72, 105, 197
Mostofi al-Mamalek 67
Mostofi, Mirza Mohammad-Ali 72
Motazedi 55
muharram (*Arabic month of mourning Imam Hussein*) 70
Murray, Ch.A. 22, 143
Murrey, James 176
Musa Abad 156–8, 160, 204
Musa Dungi 124
Musa Khan 196
Musa Qal'eh 207
Muscat 165–6
Muscovite throne 17
Mussel 57

Nahang River 168
Nahr-e Shahi 203
Nakhaei (*tribe, family, forces*) 57, 59, 66
Nakhjavan 19
Namakzar 156, 158–60, 162, 204
Napoleon Bonaparte 10, 129
Napoleon III 146
Napoleonic (*Empire, wars, etc.*) 9–10

Naraghi, Mirza Ahmad Khan 114
Naruei (*Nahruei*, *tribe, family*) 83, 187, 213
Naruei (*Nahruei*), Mohammad-Ali Khan (*son of Sardar Sharif Khan*) 85
Naruei (*Nahruei*), Sardar Saeed Khan (*Sirdar Sa'id Khan*) 83, 85, 96–7, 102, 197
Naruei (*Nahruei*), Sardar Sharif Khan (*Sherif Khan*) 67, 84–5, 88
Naser ad-Din Shah *see* Qajar, Naser ad-Din Shah
Nasser Khan (*Baluch*) 164
Nasser Khan II 165
Nathaniel, Lord George 10
Naus, Monsieur 97
nayeb (*deputy or representative of the Amir*) 53–4
Nayeb Isa Khan 142–4
Nayeb (*Naib*) Salar, Abd er-Rahim Khan 157, 159
Nazar Khan field 161
Nazem al-Molk, Mirza Moheb-Ali Khan 152
Neh, (*Neh-bandan*) 42, 49, 66, 74–5
Neizar (*reed forest*) 188, 196–8, 200–201
New, Mr. 113
New World Order 2
New York 17
Nezam ad-Doleh, Mirza Malkam Khan 190
Nider Myer 53
Nile, river 32
Nishabur 59–61, 65, 126
Nystad (*treaty of 1721*) 18
Noah, Prophet 33
North Africa 9
North America 9
Norouz (*Nowrouz*) 56, 76, 135
Nosratabad (*Nasrat Abad, Nasser Abad, Nasirabad, today's Zabol*) 56, 67–9, 85, 169, 181
Nour Mohammad 124
Nouri, Mirza Agha Khan Sadr Azam (*Prime Minister*) 12, 141–2, 146, 148
Nove Vremya (*Russian newspaper*) 193
Nurzai Sardar, Naser-Ullah Khan 124
Nushki (*Nushgki*) 170, 194

O'Tuathail, G. 8
olema (*the clerics*) 70
Olivier, Monsieur 129
Ologh Beig 36
Oman 6, 44–5
Omar Khan 137
Omayyad, Marvan I 45
Onsuri 35
Ostad of Sis 42, 44
Ottoman Empire (*Ottomans*) 5, 9, 14, 18–19, 56–7, 114, 179
Ousely, Sir Gore 130
Outram, General 144, 146
Oxus, river (*Amu Darya, Jeihun*) 24, 33–4

Padaha 171
Pakistan 13, 17, 91, 123, 154, 173, 188, 214, 216–17
Palmerston, Lord 23, 136–8
Pahlavi, dynasty 213
Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah 81, 207, 215
Pahlavi, Reza Shah (*Reza Khan*, *Brigadier Reza Khan, Sardarsepah*) 7, 26, 50, 52, 68, 77–9, 81, 88, 117–20, 159, 161, 163, 202, 204, 217
Pamir 13
Parin Valley 151
Paris 9, 35, 82, 146–7
Paris, treaty of 1815 10
Paris, treaty of 1857 12, 143, 146, 148–9, 151, 175–6, 178, 180–81, 185, 193
Parthians 4, 33
Parun 169
Pashtun(s) (*people*, *tribes, language, etc.*) 125, 211
Pashtunistan 12
Pathans 125
Persepolis 9, 32
Persia 3–4, 9–10, 14–15, 18–19, 22, 24–6, 28–9, 30, 32, 34, 51, 53, 68, 76, 79, 94, 96, 98, 115–16, 122–4, 128, 132–7, 141, 144, 147–8, 157, 167–8, 170, 175–7, 179–80, 184, 186, 194–5, 200, 209, 214
Persian (*arts, culture, civilization language, people*) 35, 41–42, 219–220
Persian Empire (*federation*) 1, 3, 5–6, 8–10, 12, 14, 16, 18–20, 30, 36–8, 41–2, 101, 123, 126, 130, 137, 177, 209, 215
Persian Gulf 5–6, 19, 32, 37, 44–5, 56, 100, 123, 137–8, 144, 146, 150, 209–10, 217
Perso-Afghan frontiers (*possessions*) 12, 194
Perso-Turan, boundaries 37
Peshin 169
Pesian, Colonel Mohammad Taghi Khan 50, 78, 213
Peter the Great (*Emperor Peter I*) 17–18, 25, 37, 210
Petrograd 51
Pirouz (*Sassanid*) 34
Pishavar (Peshawar) 85, 139, 150

pishkar (*pishakar-e daraei*, *representative of the Finance Ministry*) 53–4, 85
Plassy 15
philosophy 35
Pol Khatun (*Pol-e Khatun, Pol-I-Khatun*) 27, 29
Poland 19
Pollock, E.R. Colonel (*General*) 69, 182–3, 186
Poozeh jang Jah 196
Popalzei, Jahan Khan 61
Popalzei, Muhabat Khan 124
Pordeli (Baluchi) Sardar Mohammad Reza Khan 117, 119, 121
Post, Telegraph and Telephone (*the portfolio of*) 79
Pottinger, Elder (*Lieutenant*) 11, 137, 139
Prideaux, Major 53, 110
Prussia 10
Public Record Office 210
Punjab (*Panjab*) 12, 15, 140, 144, 150, 165
Punjgur 169

Qaen (*Kain*) 42, 48–52, 55–7, 64, 66–8, 71, 74–9, 86, 97, 100, 103, 105, 108, 111, 113, 156, 172, 186, 202
Qaen (*Kain*), Amir of 48, 55, 63, 214
Qaenat 4, 47–8, 50–51, 53, 55–6, 61, 64–6, 71–4, 77–9, 82, 85–8, 90, 92–6, 100–108, 110–12, 114–17, 119, 121, 127, 151, 156, 159, 161–2, 164, 173–4, 177, 181, 183, 188, 202–4, 213
Qaimi, Agha Mirza Abbas 119
Qajar(s) (*dynasty, family, shahs, etc.*) 6, 19, 36, 42, 64, 67, 97, 99, 106, 118, 123, 127, 130, 140, 153, 164–5, 174–5, 178, 212–13
Qajar, Abbas Mirza, Prince Abbas Mirza 64–5, 129
Qajar, Agha Mohammad Khan 63–4, 127–8, 130, 164, 213
Qajar, Fath-Ali Shah 6, 64, 128–30, 175
Qajar, Mohammad-Ali Shah 72, 104, 107, 114
Qajar, Mohammad Hassan Khan 58, 63, 126–7, 213
Qajar, Mohammad Shah 65, 133, 136–8, 164
Qajar, Mozaffar ad-Din Shah 96
Qajar, Naser ad-Din Shah 6, 27, 67, 141, 144, 153–4, 165, 175, 181, 216
Qal'eh Fath 178–9, 187
Qal'eh-gah 49
Qal'eh Kala (*Kali-I-Kala*) 152, 154
Qal'eh Kang 196
Qal'eh Khash 50
Qal'eh Nad-e Ali *(fort*) 67, 93, 178–9, 181, 187, 192, 196, 200
Qal'eh No 96
Qal'eh Sefid 173
qanat(s) 68, 86, 153, 160
Qandehar (*Kandahar, Candahar*) 10–11, 16, 58, 114, 125–8, 132–3, 136–7, 139, 140–41, 143–4, 146, 148–50, 174–6, 178, 180, 185, 194, 211
Qasreqand 164
Qara Su 22
Qara Qal'eh 24
Qaraqalpoghs 20
Qaraqoyunlu (*tribe, family*) 58
Qaraqoyunlu, Mohammad-Ali Khan 57
Qavam al-Molk 80
Qavam as-Saltaneh, Ahmad 78, 118
Qazna *see* Ghazna
Qaznavid 35, 125
Qaznavid, Sultan Mahmud 35
Qazvini, Mirza Mohammad 129
Qazvini, Qazi Mohammad 48
Qeidarites 33
Qezel Arvet 20, 23–4
Qezel Su 24, 38
Qezelbash 49
Qohestan 42, 45, 47–8, 61, 126
Qor'an, the holy 35, 59, 121
Qotb ad-Din, General 152
Quchan 20, 65, 78, 126
Quetta 85, 193
Qukan 7, 20, 25, 39

Rafi' Khan, Mirza (*Chief of Sunni-Khaneh*) 110
Rafii, Mirza Mohammad Ebrahim Khan 110
Raona 151
Rawlinson, Major Henry 11, 140
Red Army, Tommy-Gunners 117
Red Line (*proposed by McMahon in Sistan*) 171
Red Sea 32
Reuters (*news agency*) 256
Rey 123
Reza, Mr. 206
Reza Qoli Khan 65
Reza Shah Pahlavi *see* Pahlavi, Reza Shah
Ripon, Lord 13
Rokn ad-Doleh 96

Rokn al-Vezarah 115
Rome (Romans) 5, 9, 30, 33
Roman Empire (*Holy Roman Empire, civilization, etc.*) 5, 7, 9, 33
Royal Agricultural School of Bristol University 88
Royal Road 32
Rud-e Parian (*Pariun*) 191–2, 200
Rud-e Sargardan 160
Rudaki Samarqandi 122–3
Rudbar 178, 190, 199
Russell, Earl, Lord John 93, 179–81, 185–6
Russia 2, 7, 10, 13–14, 17–18, 20–21, 23–6, 30, 37–8, 51–3, 86, 92, 94, 116–17, 123, 128–30, 132, 136, 149, 173, 175, 193–5, 201–2, 204, 209–12, 214, 216
Russian (*people, rivals, Empire*) 1, 6, 16–20, 25, 209
Russian Consulate (*Consul*) 95, 98–9, 106–7, 109, 120, 173, 197–8
Russo-Iranian (*treaties, designs, cooperation, etc.*) 133, 149, 212
Russo-Ottoman (*agreement of 1729*) 15

Sabzevar 56, 148
Sad-Abad Palace 204
Sadd-e Sekandar 33
Sadr, Agha 120
Sadr Azam Nouri *see* Nouri
Saduzai (*clan*) 174
Saeed Mohammad Khan 141–3
Safapour, Sargord 119
Safavid(s) (*dynasty, kings, Empire*) 3–6, 9, 14–15, 19, 36–7, 41, 47–9, 58, 128, 164, 209, 213
Safavid, Shah Abbas*, the great* 37
Safavid, Shah Abbas I 49
Safavid, Shah Esmaeil (*Ismaeil*) 5, 48–9
Safavid, Shah Sultan Hussein 58
Safavid, Shah Tahmasp I 49
Safavid, Shah Tahmasp II 47
Saffah, Abul-Abbas 43, 45
Saffarids 35, 174, 213
Sagher 148
Sagirim 21
Sahand (*mountain*) 48
St Petersburg 13
Sakestan, Nimrouz, Zarang, Zabolestan (*ancient names of Sistan*) 174
Salar, Mohammad Hassan Khan 65–6, 141
Salgumi 197
Salim ben Ziad 45
Salisbury, Marquis of 216
Salm 33
Samanids 35
Samarqand 35, 37, 126, 210, 219
Sanbad the Zoroastrian 44
Sang-e Dokhtar *see* Kuh-e Sang-e Dokhtar
Sangu Dagh 21
Sanjarani, tribe 187, 213
Sanson's Atlas 22
Sarakhs (*old and new*) 21, 26–7, 141
Sarakhs, river 26
Sarbandi(s) 123
Sarbandi, Sardar Ali Khan 175–6
Sarbaz(s) (*foot soldier*) 55–6, 85
Sarbaz (*border area*) 164, 169
Sar-Chah-e Amiri 74
Sar-Chahi, Akhund Molla Hussein 66
Sardar Agha 80
Sardar Amin Khan 148
Sardar Ebrahim Khan 167, 169
Sardar Mohammad Sharif 148
Sardar Shahnavaz Khan 148
Sardis 32
Sarhad 50
sarhang (*colonel*) 54, 75
sartip (*brigadier*) 54, 85
Sarvari, Mr Mohammad 206
sawar(s) (*SAWARS*) 113, 195
Sassanid(s) (*dynasty, kings*) 4–5, 30, 32–4, 37, 47, 174
Satrap (*satrapy, satrapies*) 30–31, 174
Saudi Arabia 17
Sekuheh 65, 96, 139, 175
Seljuq (*Seljuqid, rulers, empire*) 34–6
Sanjideh (*senjedi*) 151–2, 154
Senate (*former Iranian Upper House*) 207
Sepehri (*Sipahri*), Agha 117
Sepoy (*Indian soldiers*) 15
Seyyed Mohammad 58
Seyyed Zia ad-Din Tabatabaei 26
Shafie Khan, Mirza 142–3
Shah and I, The 82
Shah (*the Shah, Shahanshah of Iran*) 22–3, 39, 50, 59, 64–5, 67–70, 75–6, 80–81, 87, 97–8, 104–5, 107, 116, 119, 130–37, 140–41, 144, 146, 153, 168, 177–8, 180–82, 185, 187, 193, 197, 199, 206–7, 215–17
Shah (*Shah of Afghanistan*) 80, 131
Shah Mahmud 130–31
Shah Qadam 23

Shah Qoli Khan 117, 119–20
Shah Shoja (*al-Molk Abdali*) 130–31, 138–9
Shah Soleyman 58–9
Shah Zaman 127, 129–30
Shahab-e Saqeb (*Persian newspaper*) 115
Shahgol 196
Shahi Ashrafi (*gold coin*) 177
Shahnameh (*book in Persian*) 4–5, 219
Shahraki(s) 213
Shahrokh (*Gurkani*) 36
Shahrokh Mirza (*Afshar*) 58–60, 126–8, 130
Shams ed-Din Khan 137
Shapur II 33
Shariati, Agha Mohammad Ali 120
Shariff, Colonel 138
Sharif Khan (*village*) 96
Sharifi, Agha Ebrahim 117, 119–21
Sheibani (*Sheibanid tribe, amirs*) 19, 36, 213
Sheibani, Amir Hassan Khan 64
Sheikh Safi ad-Din 48
Sheil, Lieutenant-Colonel (*Sir*), Justin 140–42, 144, 149
Shekespear, Richmond 11
Shibak Khan 49
Shi'ite(s) 35, 45–6
Shileh Shamshiri (*Shela*) 196, 200
Shir Ali Khan (*Amir of Afghanistan*) 12, 16, 69, 93, 150–51, 165, 179–81, 185–6, 220
Shir Ali Khan, Sardar 141
Shir Mohammad Khan 135
Shiraz 57
Shiraz University 81
Shirvan (*Shervan*) 21
Shoja as-Saltaneh, Hassan-Ali Mirza 131
Shokat al-Molk (*Shaukat, Shaukat ol-Mulk, etc.*) *see* Khozeimeh Amir Esmail Khan Shokat al-Molk I, or Khozeimeh Amir Ebrahim Khan Shokat al-Molk II
Shokatiyeh, (*educational establishment, Husseiniyeh, Univer*sity) 75, 77, 80, 114
Shurab, Dasht-e Shurab (*Dahana-I Shorab*) 152, 154
Siah Kuh 159–61, 188, 200
Siberia 17
siglus 32
Sikh Sar (*Sikhsar*) 196, 198–200
Simla 51
Simonich, Count 132
Sind 15, 31, 140, 150, 165
Sinkiang (*East Turkistan*) 7
Sistan (*Seistan*) 1–2, 4–5, 12, 41–2, 44–5, 49–54, 56, 61, 64–5, 67–70, 72–3, 77–8, 80, 82–3, 85–8, 90, 92–105, 107–15, 119–23, 134, 138, 150–1, 156, 161, 164–6, 169–83, 185–92, 194–96, 198, 200–203, 205, 212–17
Sistani, Sardar Ali Khan 65
Skobelev, General 20
Skrine, Sir Claremont 79
Soleimanpour, Mr. 205
Soviet Consulate 117, 119, 121
Soviet-American (*rivalries, relations*) 14
Soviet Union 2, 7, 14, 17–18, 25–9, 39, 115–16, 118, 204, 210, 217
Spain 9
Spanish-Austrian (*political authority*) 9
Strait of Hormuz 165, 217
Stanley, Lord 177
Sultan Ahmad Khan (*Sultan Ahmad Shah*) *see* Baluch, Sardar Sultan Ahmad
Sultan Hussein Mirza 49
Sultan Malek Shah 36
Sultan of Muscat 6
Sumbar 20
Sunni(s) 35, 45, 58, 125
Sunni-Khaneh 66, 110
Surat 14
Surkh Sher Baba 124
Susa 32
Sweden 9, 18–19
Sykes, Sir Percy 18, 42, 44, 47, 61, 70, 83, 85, 125, 187–8, 202
Syr Darya, river 25
Syria 5, 31

Tabarestan (*ancient name for Mazandaran*) 43
Tabas 50, 56, 64–5, 70, 72, 77, 102, 112–13
Tabibi, Dr 206
Tabriz 55
Taher, the Ambidexter (*ben Hussein, Zolyaminain*) 42, 46–7
Taherid dynasty 47, 213
Tahmasp Qoli Khan 57
Taj Mohammad Khan 176–8
Tajan, river *see* Hari-Rud
Tajikistan (*Tajiks*) 2, 7, 20, 25, 27, 125–6, 210–11
Takht-e Shahi 197, 199
Talab 173
Taliban 17, 211, 217–18
Tamer Lane (*Teimur Lang*) 14
Tappeh-e Kurki 197, 200
Tappeh-e Shahi 197

Tappeh Sharak 200
Tappeh-e Talaei (*Tappa Tilai*) 200
Tarikh Guiti-gosh (*book in Persian*) 64
Tarikh Tabari (*book in Arabic, translated into Persian*) 44–5, 47
Tartars 48
Tashakkori, Mr. Ghodratollah 206
Tate, G.P. 124, 127–8
Taylor, Colonel 175
Taylor, Peter 9, 32
tazia(s) (*religious drama showing the martyrdom of Imam Hussein*) 70
Tchorkassov, Baron 108–9
Tehran 6, 12, 20, 24–5, 30, 37–8, 50–4, 56, 63, 65, 68, 75–8, 86, 94–7, 99–107, 109–14, 116–17, 123, 127–31, 133–8, 140, 143, 148, 151, 153, 156–8, 166–70, 172–3, 175–8, 180–82, 184, 188, 190, 193–5, 197–9, 204–5, 212, 214, 216–17
Teimur Lang *see* Tamer Lane
Teimur Khan Estajlu 49
Teimurids 36, 123
tekiyeh (*places of mourning Imam Hussein*) 70
Tekke Turkman *see* Akhal Tekke Turkman
Times, The 202
Thomson, Mr. 24, 179
Tianshan 20
Tibet 2, 13, 211
Tigris (river) 5
Tilsit (*agreement*) 129–30
Todd (*Major*) D'Arcy 11, 140
Tokharestan 36
Torbat-e Heidariyeh 72, 100, 157
Torbat-e Jam 60–61, 159
Transcaspia (*Russian newspaper*) 10, 13
Trans-Caspian Review (*Russian newspaper*) 201
Trans-Caucasus 31
Trans-Jordan 31
Trans-Oxus (*Trans-Oxania*) 31, 34–5, 47, 123
Trucial States 37
Tsar (*Czar, Tzar, Zar of Russia*) 17, 23, 129
Tudeh, Communist Party (*Hezb-e Tudeh*) 116–18, 121
Tuman Agha 152
tumans (*official currency of Qajar time, still in use*) 56, 58
Tump 167, 169
Tun 50, 56, 60, 63, 65
Tunb, island 37
Tunacain (Tun and Qaen) 48
Tur 33
Turan (*Turanis*) 3–5, 32–7, 39, 219
Turkey 18, 123, 160, 204
Turkistan (*East, West, old, etc.*) 7, 10, 13, 20, 22, 27, 33, 38–9, 85, 135, 210
Turkman(s) 22–5, 27, 37–9, 49, 65, 96, 134, 213
Turkmanchai (*treaty of 1828*) 19, 26, 37, 132, 216
Turkmanistan 2, 7, 25, 27–8, 34, 37, 39–40, 126, 210
Turks 34

Ujan, 48
Union Jack 112, 183
United Nations (*UN Security Council*) 7, 39, 118, 205
United States of America (*US, America*) 2, 10, 14, 17, 39, 205–7, 211
Urals 17
Urosevic Research Centre 219
USSR *see* Soviet Union
Uygur 7
Uzbekistan (*Uzbeks*) 2, 7, 20, 25, 27, 37–9, 96, 125–6, 134, 210–11

Vakil al-Molk, Mohammad Esmail Khan 67
Vamber 22
Varahram *see* Bahram Gour
Vaziri, Ali-Naghi 55
Versailles (*palace, court of*) 19
Versailles (*treaty of 1919*) 2, 14
Viceroy of India 101, 129, 153–4, 158, 182, 193–4, 197, 199
Vicovich, Captain 136
Victoria, Queen 15, 146, 211
Vienna 19
Volga 17

Warsaw Pact 2, 14
Washington 17, 205, 215
Water & Power, (*Iranian*) Ministry of 207
Watson, Captain 103
Web Ware, Captain 171
Webb, Mr. Christopher 205
Wellesley, Lord Arthur (*later: Duke of Wellington*) 10, 15
wendell 55
West Asia 1–2, 6, 8–9, 30, 209–10, 212
Westphalia (*treaty of 1648*) 8, 9
Winter, Captain C.B. 157
Woodhouse, Lord (*Earl of Clarendon*) 144
World War I (*first*) 14, 53, 114

World War II (*second*) 2, 14, 204
World War in Iran (*book in English*) 79
Wynne, H.L. 177, 182

Xinjiang 7

Yal-e Khar 152
Yamin Nezam, Abdel-Hamid Khan Ghaffari 95–7, 196–9
Yamut Turkman 21, 23, 38
Yangi Qal'eh 21
Yaqub Beg (*of Kughand*) 20
Yaqub Khan 69, 93
Yar Mohammad Khan *Zahir ad-Doleh* (*Vazir, Prince*) 93, 132, 134–5, 139–42, 156
Yarghand 20
Yate, C.E. (*Lieutenant-Colonel*) 73, 85
Yazdi, Abdor-Reza 65
Yazdan 158, 160–61, 204, 215
Younghusband, Francis 14

Zabihullah Khan, Sartip 114
Zabol, 67–8, 80, 82, 117, 181
Zabuli, Abd al-Majid Khan 206
Zahedan 117, 118
Zamin Davar (Zamindavar) 191
Zamiran 169
Zand (*dynasty, rulers, etc.*) 63–4, 164, 174
Zand, Karim Khan 63, 126–7
Zand, Lotf-Ali Khan 64, 127, 164
Zia Bay, Colonel 159, 163
Zimmerman, C. 22
Zolfaqar Pass (*Dahaneh Zolfaqar*) 22, 27, 154
Zoroaster, Prophet 125, 219
Zurabad 156–7